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MRS. CARTWRIGHT.

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LETTER

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LETTERS

LETTERS

MORAL AND ENTERTAINING.

LETTER I.

LADY GOODVILLE TO HORTENSIA.

*Requesting her Advice on the Education of
her Daughters.*

YOU will be surpris'd, my dear Hortensia, to learn that after above seven years devoted to retirement, I propose once more emerging from my retreat, and revisiting a world, the pomps and vanities of which I have so long abjured. It is not, assure yourself, that I look upon that period, or one of twice the length, as a sufficient time for mourning my irreparable loss ; but reflection, aided by religion, has convinced me, that in cherishing my grief for their father, I forget the attention

B

which

which is due to the lovely pledges of our inauspicious nuptials.

FATAL, ever to be lamented day! in which ambition tempted my Lyfander to forego the heart-felt pleasures of domestic ease, and risk his life and happiness for martial fame! but for that this widowed heart had never learnt to mourn, these eyes, grown dim with unavailing tears, had yet beheld him happy: deprived of a friend to sooth my lonely hours, an amiable companion to share with me the tender task of rearing helpless innocence, I have neglected the necessary duties of a mother, wept over my children while I ought to have been cultivating their youthful minds.

CONSCIOUS it is not in an obscure village that my daughters can acquire accomplishments adapted to their youth and quality: I have at length determined to sacrifice every dearer consideration to their interest, and though it pains me to quit a spot in which I have so long indulged the melancholy pleasure of reflection, I propose an immediate removal either to
the

the metropolis or its environs, the latter I am rather inclined to fix on, as most salutary to the constitution of my girls; for after having so long breathed the pure air of B—, their health might probably sustain an injury from too sudden a transition.

THE dejection of my spirits has hitherto prevented my adopting any regular mode of education, they have simply been taught, that to be good is to be respectable, that as we can command nothing without the divine permission, they have every thing to be thankful for, and nothing wherein to pride themselves, unless the power of contributing to the necessities of others. At nine years of age they are very indifferent proficient at their needle, have read but little, and are as perfectly unskilled in every politer science as if they were the children of the most humble peasant, yet from the purity of their ideas, and nobleness of sentiment, I have the vanity to believe they would do honour to a station far superior to that in which providence has placed them.

LOUISA inherits all the impetuosity and ambition of her unfortunate father, but with it is blended a sweetness of disposition which prevents her from displaying it on any occasion but those which do credit to her humanity; to see the dumb creature abused ever excites her most serious resentment, even though the abuse happens to be from her superior both in age and quality; she would hazard her own life to save that of her cat, yet was she to see it afterwards exercising an act of cruelty either on birds, or an animal of inferior strength, would as quickly fly to execute justice on the tyrant, as if it had never been a favourite.

EMELINE, on the contrary, is all gentleness and affability, so diffident of her own judgment that she presumes neither to speak or act without the previous approbation of another, and, with a disposition alike benevolent, is so fearful of doing wrong, that she stifles every generous emotion of her heart rather than hazard any displeasure; while her sister, as if unconscious

conscious that even a good action may be ill timed, asks the advice of no one, but is liberal to excess, and dispenses indiscriminately her charity to all who own themselves necessitous.

THEY have each a regular allowance for their own little expences, and I sometimes find the one rich as an usurer, for want of resolution to follow the dictates of her inclination; the other without a penny, from suffering hers to govern her too implicitly. Absorbed in melancholy, it was not until very lately that I discovered the different bent of their dispositions; and you may believe that it has since been my constant study to divest Emeline of her diffidence; and moderate those passions which so powerfully influence the conduct of Louisa. I flatter myself that my assiduities on that head in both will be rewarded, but after having been so long detached from society, I can by no means look upon myself as a competent judge of the accomplishments most essential in their education; the formation of their morals

I may, perhaps, take upon myself with some probability of success, but that of their manners must be left to a more able hand.

To you, my dear Hortensia, I address myself, as to one whose superior knowledge of the world (in its present state) must enable you more justly to point out a plan which may serve to render them respectable among their equals; yet preserve them from the prejudices of fashionable folly. By some among the small circle of my acquaintance, I am advised to send them a few years to one of the most capital schools in town; others recommend a governess at home; and one lady, who more peculiarly piques herself upon her knowledge of the world, avers that France is the only place in which a female can acquire the necessary embellishments of her sex. Had I not been so long accustomed to their amusive society, I might perhaps have less aversion to a public education; but the instructions of some sensible, discreet woman, under my own particular

particular inspection, appears to me a plan far more eligible than either placing them in a seminary in town, or transporting them to a country, the cringing servility of which we misname politeness, and of which the accomplishments are merely superficial.

I SHALL form no settled determination until I have the happiness of hearing from my amiable friend, her advice will have greater weight than that of any other person, because I am assured that it will be such as is consistent both with prudence and good sense; neither dictated by an attachment to modern gaieties, or a contempt of serious instructions, a folly too prevalent even among the inhabitants of this rural spot; for though sixty miles from London, they pride themselves as much upon the refinement of their ideas, as those who always make it their winter's residence, and are more strict observers of the rules of precedence than any other rule in life.

My steward brings you this, and will remain in town until he has been successful

8 LETTERS MORAL

ful in finding out an eligible situation. Should you hear of a small purchase within a few miles distance, be so obliging to inform him. Adieu, my dear Hortensia, fail not writing, and believe me with much sincerity,

Yours,

E. GOODVILLE.

LETTER

LETTER II.

HORTENSIA'S ANSWER.

On the Education of a Daughter.

YOUR letter, my dear Madam, conveyed to me extreme pleasure and satisfaction; I rejoice in your determination of coming once more among your friends; though must own it a circumstance which very little surpris'd me, as it is what I always supposed would one day come to pass. Not to have expressed the most unfeigned sorrow for the loss of a man endeared to you by every tender tie, and doubly so by his uncommon merit, would have betrayed a heart devoid of every feminine sensation; but to permit that sorrow to obliterate every other friend from your remembrance, to make you negligent of those duties in which you are so infinitely formed to excel, is a weakness so entirely incompatible

with the good sense and greatness of soul which ever distinguished the conduct of Lady Goodville, that I was persuaded, though grief would have its course, reason would also one day triumph, and we should again behold her happy amidst her admiring friends, an ornament to society and a blessing to her children.

THOUGH at a much later period than I imagined, my predictions, thank Heaven, are verified, and I recover a treasure which, during your long seclusion from the world, I have sought in vain. Disinterested friendship we are told is a phenomenon seldom found in courts; I have made it my pursuit in almost every corner of the habitable globe, yet may say with truth, never but once was successful in my researches; and that once how short-lived was my pleasure! the three years happiness I then experienced have been since outbalanced by seven of pain: nominal friends, the poor exchange for real ones, and lips which scorn deceit are under the continual

continual necessity of being at variance with my heart.

MANY times have I been tempted to break in upon your solitude, and by all the arts of soft persuasion endeavour to draw you from a retirement, which served only to nourish and increase your woe. I had once not only thought of it, but actually ordered my servants to make preparation for my journey; when a reflection darted across my mind which at once put to flight my determined resolution. I considered that you had children, who would in time become more powerful incentives to rouse you from your lethargy of grief than all the eloquence of your Hortensia; and that for their sakes you would ever forego the luxury of weeping.

EVERY letter I received in which were the names of Emeline and Louisa, more confirmed me in the idea. I looked upon them as the pilots which were destined to bring you once more to the port of friendship, and every day anticipated (with more impatience)

impatience) a period which I flattered myself was not far distant.

THE sweet innocents have at length prevailed, and, joined to the pleasure of again beholding my Eliza, I shall have the additional one of embracing her lovely offspring, in whose happiness I find myself as warmly interested as if they were my own. You do me infinite honour, my worthy friend, in leaving to my judgment the decision of a point I am so little qualified to determine: I can only say, that was I the mother of a family, and my fortune would admit of the expence, a private education would with me ever have the preference to a public one. Where only the care of two or three young ladies is undertaken at a time, there is sufficient leisure to examine their several dispositions, and damp the progress of their foibles before they can take root; but amidst a multitude, they must be almost too deeply impressed for eradication before they are discernible; and even should they happen to be noticed, the advice, instead
of

of being confined to the particular failings of one, is obliged to be couched in such general terms, that it frequently misses of its effect, and neither governess or pupil are a degree the forwarder. It is true, that emulation sometimes works more powerfully on the youthful mind than all the instruction which can be given, but that only happens where the understanding is peculiarly enlightened and susceptible; those whose apprehensions are less quick, have little chance of acquiring either knowledge or accomplishments, where the attention of the governess must necessarily be divided among so many besides themselves. In maturer age, we ever allow that bad example is contagious, and as in mixed companies there are generally some of indifferent morals; so it is in schools, the bad very frequently pervert the good. Many are sent to public seminaries, not so much with a view of instruction, as from being ungovernable in their tempers, addicted to deceit, or so extremely forward and vivacious in their disposition,

disposition, that their parents are under the necessity of sending them from home in order to restrain their levity; these passions, instead of being subdued by confinement, (like flames which have been only damped, when they ought to have been properly extinguished) gain new strength from opposition, and every leisure hour is employed in forming schemes to deceive the vigilance both of governesses and parents; the latter of whom they presume have no right over their conduct, and the former is considered only as a cruel jailor. Was it a rule in every boarding-school, to take none but those whose extreme youth excluded a probability of their having been previously perverted either by precept or example, this mode of educating our young people would be attended with fewer inconveniences; but where innocence and art, vice and virtue, are indiscriminately blended, is it to be expected that instruction can have its proper influence? or that the hearts of the more youthful and inexperienced

perienced should remain uninjured amidst those who have been early initiated into folly and dissimulation?

WAS public tuition unattended with any of the ill consequences before mentioned, there yet remains another objection worthy a parent's consideration. It confounds all distinction between people of birth and those of mean extraction, a circumstance which, in my opinion, ought to be particularly attended to. In some of the most genteel seminaries in town, we may find females of every degree, from the daughters of a peeress, down to those of the meanest mechanic; the one by conversing with those who are so much beneath them, contract a meanness of habit sometimes not eradicable by time and riper years; the other, from the society of their superiors, a taste for grandeur, and an elegance of manners which most assuredly terminates in their future ruin.

THESE, my dear Lady Goodville, are my sentiments of a boarding-school education, and my objections to a monastic one are not

not less numerous; for the latter has all the inconveniences of the former, with the additional danger of their principles being injured by the religious superstition of the country, and equally so by the constitutional levity of its inhabitants, which even the rigours of a convent are insufficient to restrain.

I HOPE you will believe that it is with no design of complimenting, I declare, that none is better qualified than yourself for the delightful task of teaching the young ideas how to shoot. No attention could compensate to your daughters for the loss of yours; by the aid of masters they may acquire embellishments worthy of their rank, but the particular duties of their sex, cannot be more strongly impressed upon their minds than by one who has ever lived in the continual practice of them. To lessen the fatigue which must necessarily attend a constant attention to their studies, it will be proper to make choice of some prudent, affable, young person, perfectly skilled in the French and
Italian

Italian languages, but a native of the British Isle, for to the elegance and douceur of the Parisians, I would wish them to unite the delicacy and purity of Englishwomen; for which reason I should look upon a person of French extraction, much less proper for the honour of sharing with you the tender task of their instruction, than one who had acquired their language, without the ideas too generally annexed.

As to the particular accomplishments in which it is necessary they should be versed, custom will in a great measure point out: but in the ornamental as well as useful part of education, it depends more materially on the peculiar bent of their inclination (which sometimes shuts the understanding to one species of knowledge, while it leads them to excel in others), than all the assiduity of the instructor. As to the prejudices of fashionable folly, there is no danger of their imbibing them while under the protection of a mother, whose conduct is so truly opposite to all which folly dictates; and who,
by

by the prudent choice of her acquaintance, will ever secure them from being perverted by bad example.

ALL the danger consists in being liable to imposition from the person made choice of as their governess, for many preserve the external appearance of virtue, who have long forfeited all pretensions to its interior merits; the best heart in the world may sometimes be imposed upon by the specious colourings of art, and while they believe themselves patronizing a saint, are in reality cherishing a scorpion. To avoid inconveniences of this kind, the greatest caution is most assuredly necessary; for which reason, with the leave of my good friend, I will endeavour to find out a person deserving the precious trust: and by placing her first about myself, as a companion, form my judgment of her rectitude and abilities, which in such a situation will much sooner discover themselves than in one in which the mask of morality is more requisite.

SHOULD

SHOULD Manly not have been already successful in his pursuit, I have the pleasure to inform you that my father has at this time the disposal of a house at Acton, which will entirely suit your purpose; it is elegant, and sufficiently roomy for your family, yet not very large; but what renders it, in my opinion, more particularly worth your purchase is the garden, which for its extensiveness and beauty, will fully compensate for that you leave behind; it has been cultivated by the late owner with such assiduous care, that its produce both in summer and autumnal fruits, is far superior to any one around us; and in their different seasons, abounds with such a profusion of odoriferous flowers and shrubs, that its fragrance diffuses itself through all the village. As it is the property of a gentleman going to reside in the West-Indies, (for which reason he is in haste to dispose of it) I should wish to have an answer before the advertisements are inserted, for I make no doubt the applications will be innumerable, as soon as it is publicly known that the
owner

owner is going abroad. To have my amiable friend so near me will be an inexpressible satisfaction, but which no selfish reasons should induce me to propose, if I was not of opinion that the situation would be perfectly convenient and agreeable to herself. I shall impatiently await a letter, and am, with much esteem,

&c. &c.

HORTENSIA.

LETTER

L E T T E R III.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

SINCE the receipt of your Ladyship's last letter, I have been so fortunate as to meet with a young person whom I flatter myself will prove to you a very valuable acquisition; she is the daughter of a clergyman, who, having no other children, has devoted to her improvement all the leisure hours of an exemplary life; and though at his death, he bequeathed her only a trifle, insufficient to support her independent of the world, has left her rich in merit and accomplishments; a treasure which will procure her more real happiness than all the wealth of Cræsus. In a journey to the west of England, I some years since became acquainted with her father, and the amiability of Bella (though not more than fifteen) was at that time so conspicuous, that she was the admiration of the village. I would gladly have engaged

gaged her as my companion, but Mr. Ervin never could be prevailed upon to deprive himself of her society: at my request, she afterwards frequently wrote to inform me of their welfare, and her letters impressed me with the most favourable opinion of her literary talents. It is now a fortnight since I received one, in which she expressed herself inconsolable for the death of the best of fathers; and mentioned an intention of endeavouring to procure the patronage of some worthy family, in which her abilities might become serviceable; not less charmed at an opportunity of placing her so eligibly, than of serving my friend, I immediately wrote, and proposed to her the tuition of your daughters, which proposals were accepted with the most lively sense of gratitude. She is now with me, and waits only your arrival at Acton to offer herself in a character, in which I am perfectly prepossessed she is formed by nature to excel, and which I doubt not but she will support with

with honour to herself, and satisfaction to her benefactress.

I HAVE (with the assistance of Bella) seen all the furniture properly disposed in your little villa, and by the time your Ladyship becomes its inhabitant, shall have completed a small library for the sole use of her intended pupils, which, as my first present, will I hope be accepted without ceremony, and considered only as a trifling token of esteem, from one whose good wishes are far less limited than her abilities.

GENERAL observation convinces us that both vice and virtue, in a great measure, derive their origin from literary pursuits; it is therefore doubly incumbent on those who have the care of forming the youthful mind, to direct the studies of their pupils towards works peculiarly calculated to inspire the latter: there are certainly many amusive publications which may be read without endangering the morals; but if once they contract a habit for superficial kind of reading, the more serious and instructive

structive sort of books are perused with an inattention and indifference which considerably damps the progress of their improvement. It is necessary they should first become acquainted with authors who treat on general subjects rather than narrative ones; for the mind, from being too much interested in the fate of the principal characters, attends not to the digressions, which are frequently the only part of a novel worth perusal.

MANY indiscriminately put into the hands of their children (or at least suffer them to read) every species of literary productions, with which the circulating librarian happens to have swelled his catalogue, and at fifteen, they will have run through as great a number of books as they ought to have perused at thirty. The effects of such an imprudent method of proceeding is, that they acquire a profusion of romantic and absurd ideas which influence their future conduct; yet not one solid reflection which may withhold them from imprudence, or support them
under

under the accidental ills with which they may chance to be oppressed. It is with books as with our friends, they should be few, and chosen with discretion. The chief end of reading is to retain, but by turning over a great number, the retentive faculties are blunted; and the mind, instead of being a tablet, to which we may always refer with safety, becomes a chaos of confused ideas, which on an emergency is incapable of furnishing us with one reasonable conjecture or reflection.

To inspire children with a true taste for literary amusements, their studies should be limited to a few well chosen authors; and if capable of reading with any degree of judgment and precision, they cannot be taught too early to make their own observations upon paper on every particular passage which appears to them most striking. This helps to strengthen their memory, and improves them in their writing, besides accustoming them betimes to express their ideas with propriety and elegance. I would by no means have them

C

confined

confined to religious subjects only; for, though it is the duty of every parent to impress their children with the belief of an invifible deity, moft of our books written on that fubject are couched in terms too myfterious for the weak comprehenfions of a child, and are therefore better let alone till their underftanding is more expanded, and their judgment becomes fufficiently clear for them to comprehend thofe parts of fcriptural myftery with which we wifh them to be acquainted

BEFORE they are indulged in the perufal of any fpecies of dramatic works, it is proper they fhould have fome knowledge of hiftory, both ancient and modern; and to underftand what they read, it is equally neceffary that they fhould be verfed in the heathen mythology; the one to ferve as a key to the productions of the tragic mufe, the other of the comic: for a perfon who has made neither of thefe their ftudy, can acquire no degree of tafte either for poetry or painting. Till fixteen, the fole end of reading fhould be for their improvement;

provement; and from that period (under proper restrictions) may be allowed to become their amusement; but the perusal of books of immoral tendency can at no age be justifiable, or the least consistent with that delicacy of character which every female should endeavour to preserve.

My little friends will find their library to consist only of a small collection, divided into three different departments. The first, they may indiscriminately peruse at their discretion; and the use of the others be permitted them in proportion as their ideas begin to expand; as they increase in years and judgment it will admit of considerable additions, but at present it is more essential to their improvement, than if it abounded with a greater variety.

It is necessary that a knowledge of their own country should precede that of any other; I therefore must recommend to their attention (as the most concise publication which treats on that subject) an abbreviation of the history of England in

a series of letters from a nobleman to his son. This will inform them of as much as is necessary they should be acquainted with, without fatiguing the memory, the general consequence of works more voluminous. In order to unbend the mind from their more serious studies, there are Addison's Spectators, Gay's Fables, Mrs. Rowe's Letters, and several other productions equally amusing and instructive: I had named Telemachus among the latter, but Miss Irvin very judiciously observes it to be a book which, though generally given to children, is very ill adapted to their capacities, unless they have first acquired some knowledge of the fabulous pantheon, which at her request I have placed in the first class of their library; and have no doubt but, under the instructions of this worthy girl, they will soon become proficient in every useful and ornamental science. She pleasingly anticipates your arrival, and is impatient to behold her little pupils. To make herself mistress of their friendship and affection, will

will (I am conscious, from the engaging softness of her disposition) be her first pursuit ; and so accomplished a governess never need doubt the efficacy of her precepts. I should again have to apologize for the length of my epistle, if the servant who waits to convey it to the post-office did not remind me that it is time to subscribe myself

Your most devoted

HORTENSIA.

LETTER IV.

FROM EUPHROSYNE TO AMANDA.

On the Consequence of Gaming.

WHEN I consider that nature delights in change, that, unless varied, the most pleasing amusements grow joyless and insipid, I am astonished that so large a portion of mankind should sacrifice their time, health, and interest, to one which affords not even the felicity of satisfactory reflection; need I say that it is gaming? cards, certainly, among others, may innocently serve to fill a void in the chequered scenes of life; but where gain is the inducement, play degenerates into vice. A certain lady of our acquaintance, whose sentiments on every diversion are generally rigid, says they should be never introduced but where the parties are totally destitute of conversable talents, or in companies where the tide of scandal runs so high,

high, that even painted paper may prove a happy substitute ; and adds, that when any lady, with whom she is not intimately acquainted, proposes a pool to pass away an hour, she is led to imagine her deficient of intellectual accomplishments, or that she entertains a contemptible opinion of those of her company, and wishing to be more upon a level, introduces cards.

My ideas, I must own, do not in this respect strictly correspond with her's, for there are many sensible women who are examples that our sex may be fond of cards, though possessed of every qualification to render them admired ; but I must do her the justice to acknowledge, that it would have been a far more uncharitable suggestion, had she imagined that they introduced them for the sake of gain, and equally absurd to have supposed that they sat down to the card-table with a hope of losing.

You, my dear Amanda, devote your time to nobler purposes ; say then, is there three reasonable arguments which can be

offered for this fashionable diversion when carried to its usual pitch of excess? Amusement, custom, the votaries of dissipation would answer. But where, where will they find a third? and on what foundation are the former built? If amusement merely is the motive, why play for sums which, if lost, must affect their temper and dissipate their fortune; if won, must give to the feeling mind the most sensible uneasiness for the losing party? are there not numbers no less entertaining, yet devoid of dangers ever attendant on female gamesters? alas! innumerable are the rocks and quicksands which environ their steps; beneath the cards lurk envious shafts, shafts aimed at fame and happiness! few of those who make them their pursuit escape without loss of temper, health, and beauty: where large sums are contended for, the Graces ever wing their flight; anxiety, envy, distrust, and peevishness usurp their throne, and happy if some insidious traitor, taking advantage of the losing moment, purchases not a jewel more inestimable than gold.

I WAS

I was led into this train of reflection from a visit I yesterday made to Lady Lucre; when I entered the drawing-room the company had some time been assembled, and most of them were seated at the tables. A gentleman, who apparently wished to resign his ill fortune with his cards, politely offered me his place; but as I very seldom play (and then only for silver), I declined the favour, and amused myself in walking from side to side, the better to observe the countenances of those who did.

THE quick transitions from grave to gay are inconceivable; one moment, I beheld a blooming beauty arrayed in all the smiles of health and happiness; the next, pale, angry, and dismayed; forsaken by the aces, the smiles forsook her also. According to the various turns of fortune, so changed the features of the company: great, O goddess, is thy power! by magic irresistible thou canst transform an angel to a fury, a fury to an angel.

I had placed myself by the chair of the beautiful Countess of * * * *; it was

evident that a run of ill luck had dilated her Ladyship's purse beyond the usual bounds; for in vain did I strive to retrace any of those numerous graces which render her the admiration of mankind; those lovely eyes which (when animated with the smile of innocent vivacity) give joy to every beholder, sparkled with envious rage; Lady Fineffe had coolly pocketed her last remaining guinea. What was to be done? her lord was parsimonious, hated play (in fact so does her Ladyship, but fashion governs); to go home would subject her to the raillery of the company; by staying, she might not only recover her losses, but return some hundreds richer; the last argument was most prevailing. The noble fair one yielded assent to another pool, and staking her gold repeater, played with zeal redoubled; all would not do, the Goddess, deaf as blind, was inattentive to her prayers; boasted with matadores, not even a friendly ace of the red division to support her spirits! deal succeeded deal, but still no favourable turn. Sir

Charles

Charles Sycophant, who had been attentive to the various conflicts of the Lady's mind, and who, if fame speaks true, had long been a secret admirer of her beauty, saw with pleasure the cruelty of fortune; in proportion as her hopes diminished his increased, and seizing the moment of her embarrass, threw negligently his purse into her lap, and, to shew himself a friend perfectly disinterested, withdrew immediately, flattering himself, no doubt, that he should be repaid with—honour.

SHOULD he fortunately be disappointed of his views (which the known virtues of her Ladyship leave no doubt of), how many are there who plan them too successfully! even those who have been proof against every art, unmoved by the blandishments of the gay deceiver, and whose hearts have been early fortified with the love of virtue, have been seduced by gaming. To express the abhorrence of it is a task I am unequal to, but if ever allowable, it can only be in those who have outlived
their

their beauty, and have no relatives who may be injured by their losses.

CUSTOM authorises it, is the general plea, the very most that can be offered by a thinking being. To what purpose are we endued with reason, if we suffer ourselves to be guided by others in opposition to its dictates? by the same rule we might offer a palliative for every offence we may be prompted to commit. When I behold a party of ladies playing with as great avidity as if the future happiness of their lives depended on a card, I cannot help wishing that there was an act of parliament, whereby every gamester was constrained to appropriate their winnings to charitable purposes; the contest then would be, who should draw upon themselves the largest share of blessings; for as none would play for greater sums than they could afford to lose without injuring their fortune, the amusement would become a source of happiness to the wretched, a fund of satisfaction to themselves. It would then be attended with none of
that

that anxiety and uneasiness of mind, which ever accompanies an act to which our reason cannot reconcile us, and instead of depriving beauty of its most attractive charm, the benevolence of the heart would diffuse itself over the countenance, and give to loveliness an additional eclat.

I REMEMBER once to have been a witness of the agreeable effects produced by such a plan. A large party were assembled at Mrs. Modern's, among whom were Miss Worthy and the amiable Berinthia. Just as the company were placing themselves at their respective tables, a paper was presented to the lady of the house, setting forth the distresses of a young widow and six helpless infants, whose father had lost his life in asserting the cause of his country against the Americans; angry at such an unseasonable intrusion, Mrs. Modern threw the letter disdainfully upon the sofa, and bid her servant acquaint the poor wretch, that she had nothing for her; but every vagrant had a parish, to which she and her children would do better to apply.

THE

THE feeling soul can alone be sensible of the sensations of Berinthia; her whole sex appeared to her debased by this inhuman speech; in her heart she reversed the sentiments of the queen of Sweden, and despised the lady who made it, not because she was not a man, but because she was a woman. The first convenient moment she took up the discarded paper, and retiring to a window with her sister, they attentively perused the pathetic tale; the tear of pity stole along their lovely cheeks, unseen by any but myself. With the solicitude of a tender mother who hangs with pleasure on every gleam of sensibility which dawns upon her children's minds, I watched the rising emotions of their hearts. You know, my dear Amanda, how much I interest myself in the welfare of those two young ladies, and will believe me when I assure you, that I felt a momentary degree of vanity at being related to such worthy girls; and had they been graced with a diadem, could not have said

to

to my heart with greater satisfaction,
 “They are the daughters of my brother.”

WIPING away the tear of compassion, they returned to the company, and though each had before declined playing, placed themselves at the card-table. A general murmur of surprise ran through the room, “I thought, ladies, you never played for
 “gold,” exclaimed Lady Shuffle, with a sneer.

“NOR do we now Madam,” replied Berinthia “but (casting a significant
 “glance at Mrs. Mordern,) we play for
 “the unfortunate widow.”

IN a moment the example became prevalent. A few only, whose hearts could acknowledge no other deity than Plutus, opposed the charitable plan, and those were benevolent against their inclination, for fortune favoured not their avarice. With eyes beaming delight unutterable, the good girl collected the winnings of the company, and adding to it the residue of her purse, ordered her servant to carry it immediately to the distressed family.

No

No sooner had she left the room to give her orders, than her conduct became a subject for their severest censures.

“How charitable some people can be
“at the expence of others,” cried Melissa;
“for my part, I never let my right hand
“know what my left hand does. But
“Berinthia, I see, can play for fame,
“though too conscientious to play for
“money; had she been sure of losing, I
“doubt much whether such a proposal
“had been made.”

“I THINK indeed,” says Arachne, “the
“young lady might have found some
“other opportunity of displaying her
“benevolent dispositions, than at a time
“when it could not be done without lay-
“ing a tax upon the company; besides,
“it is absolutely appropriating to her own
“purposes, that which in reality is the
“property of the servants.”

“OR rather of their mistrefs,” retorted
“I (in some degree warmed from my
“usual gentleness by the severity of their
“sarcasm upon my young friend); many
“ladies

“ ladies there are in the world, I have
 “ heard, who cloath and pay their do-
 “ mestics at the expence of their visitors ;
 “ but as I never looked upon Mrs. Mo-
 “ dern among that number, I think Be-
 “ rinthia cannot in any degree be charged
 “ with an infringement on the servants’
 “ rights ; I dare answer, that conduct,
 “ which does her infinite honour, was
 “ alone dictated by the goodness of her
 “ heart.”

“ I cannot say, Madam, that it appears
 “ to me in the same point of view,” re-
 plied Melissa, “ to make others the in-
 “ struments of our charity, shews a dis-
 “ union between the heart and hand, if
 “ we feel for distresses, why not relieve
 “ them without applying to our neigh-
 “ bours ? for though Berinthia did not
 “ solicit the company to follow her ex-
 “ ample, she knew it must become pre-
 “ valent, however contrary to their in-
 “ clinations.

“ THAT Madam,” said a gentleman, who
 until then had been silent on the subject,
 “ is

“ is a still farther proof of the goodness
 “ of the lady’s heart; she knew that to
 “ generous minds a hint would be suffi-
 “ cient, and such only, I dare affirm, she
 “ wished to unite with her in relieving
 “ distressed innocence; an incitement to
 “ bad acts is censurable in every one, but
 “ surely those who promote the cause of
 “ virtue, deserve our warmest praise.”

SHE needed no other champion: on her
 return into the drawing-room, Melissa and
 Arachne hung their heads abashed; a
 tacit acknowledgment that they beheld
 her superiority, and secretly approved that
 merit, which though they envied, they
 dared not to imitate.

I HAVE, perhaps, my dear Amanda, al-
 lowed my pen to stray too far upon a
 subject, which with little propriety can
 be addressed to one entirely exempt from
 this fashionable foible; but when writing
 to yourself, I consider that you have a
 sister, who may perhaps reap some advan-
 tage from our correspondence. She has
 been bred in a country peculiarly addicted
 to

to it, and, I have observed with pain, appears to have imbibed an early propensity for the infatuating vice. Warn her of its dangers, tell her it leads to every turbulent and selfish passion; that if indulged to excess, is odious in the male sex, but particularly so in ours. She will perhaps urge that her acquaintance would be offended at her refusal, that they would laugh at her scruples; convince her that it is far better they should rally her for being unfashionable, than for being imprudent.

IN that, as in every important point of conduct, it is necessary to shew a determined and steady resolution; so far from being inconsistent with the gentleness and delicacy so becoming to our sex, it makes us respectable in our own eyes, and dignifies us in those of others; and when once found that our prudent resolves are proof against the solicitations of those who are incapable of making such, they will address them to those whose weakness renders them less able to withstand their arguments. Thousands there are who, to
avoid

avoid a momentary laugh, subject themselves to ridicule the remainder of their lives, and suffer their reputations to be murdered through false pride, as the contrary sex do their lives through false honour.

I SHALL make no apology for having troubled you with this long letter; when writing to my Amanda, I consider myself as thinking loudly; and that of mutually transferring thoughts is one of friendship's greatest pleasures. Adieu, my good friend, with innumerable wishes for your happiness, I remain, with much sincerity,

Your

EUPHROSYNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

FROM ARDELIA TO MORVINA.

*On the Folly of Indulging a Belief in
Predestination.*

INSINCERITY, I have ever been taught to believe, is incompatible with friendship; it will therefore be unnecessary to offer an apology for the freedom with which I am going to deliver my sentiments on the favourite theme of her who has long honoured me with the name of friend. Yes, my dear Morvina, I would willingly prove myself deserving the tender epithet, and to that end wish to eradicate from your heart every idea, every opinion which may tend to the destruction of its repose. I was yesterday pained beyond expression to hear the earnestness with which you supported the argument so warmly opposed by Lyfander and his sister, and on which, as I could not defend

you,

you, I chose to remain silent; for the admonitions of friendship, like domestic discord, ought ever to be private.

THOUGH conscious of my inability to offer any more reasonable, more eloquent than theirs, I trust there is one left for me far more prevalent, it is the bonds of affection that have so long united us, and which, exclusive of that one small article of faith, has given to us similar dispositions, and similar accomplishments. Indifferent persons may oppose merely for the spirit of opposition, but when a friend takes upon her the task of confuting those arguments to which her judgment cannot reconcile itself, be assured they are erroneous, and such as will not bear supporting without a violation of reason, or those tender ties which unite our souls. Believe me, Morvina, there is not in nature so dangerous a delusion as that of a belief in predestination, not one so destructive of every virtuous impulse; were it an opinion generally adopted, all kinds of dissolution would prevail among mankind; by relying

ing on the irrevocability of fate, they would neither endeavour to prevent evil or attain good, avoid the commission of crimes or dread the punishment of them; languor and inactivity would take possession of every noble faculty, and for want of a necessary exertion, we should sink into error merely because we believed it unavoidable.

You will perhaps urge, that, on the contrary, we may imagine ourselves destined to be invariably virtuous, and on the strength of that idea, oppose with resolution every temptation which may happen to assail us;—granted: but do you consider, my dear, that nature is ever prone to embrace those sentiments most conducive to its present happiness; the illusions of pleasure are prevailing, even reason itself sometimes bows down before them. By relying too firmly on the destinies, we deprive ourselves of every self-actuating principle, and leave to an invisible power the guardianship of those virtues, which are given us to improve and cultivate. It is
equally

equally indifferent and absurd whether we believe ourselves destined to happiness or misery, vice or virtue, for each are sentiments unworthy a reasonable being. Difficulty of attainment enhances every pleasure within the sphere of our enjoyment : misery becomes less poignant, when conscious our own endeavours have not been wanting to prevent it. Virtue would cease to be meritorious if the effect of destiny rather than self-will : and vice must lose its horrors when believed to be involuntary. Who then can prudently indulge ideas so unfavourable to their own felicity, nay, even unfavourable to Christianity ? for, is it not the highest injustice to our Creator, to suppose he formed us merely as pieces of mechanism, limited our understanding, and left us without power ? Is it probable that a divinity, himself all purity and goodness, should purposely create robbers, murderers, and villains ; that the eye which delights in good actions should promote the commission of bad ?—No, my friend, the sense
with

with which you are so liberally endowed, must, I am convinced, prompt a different opinion. Made after his own divine image, we all enter life equal candidates for happiness and virtue; and sensible that innocence has many foes to combat with, he gives us reason as a shield. We are not to infer, that because Providence permits vice—it ordains it also: on the contrary, we are all endued with a certain set of faculties, which it rests wholly on ourselves to render advantageous or destructive. In short, good and evil is before our eyes, and on the choice we make, depends our eternal joy or misery.

BESIDES those already mentioned, numberless are the inconveniences attending a delusion so fatal to repose, and that of laying ourselves open to every species of imposition the deceptions may be prompted to practise against us, is not the least among the number. However worthy of general esteem, there hardly ever yet lived a man who could affirm himself without an enemy, few who have but one; while we

D

scruple

scruple not openly to aver our principles, is it not probable that some one, induced by malice, interest, or some motive not less powerful, may take advantage of our weakness to lure us to our ruin? Indeed, my friend, you know not half the dangers which attend the predestinarian. It is, I acknowledge, the duty of every one to meet adversity with fortitude, and it displays a nobleness of disposition for which they are commendable; but it is still more their duty to endeavour to withstand its shafts; to rush headlong into a pit because it is thrown open for us, is a weakness which no argument can justify, while there is a path either to the right or to the left; nor are those less to be condemned who behold the rewards of virtue within their reach, yet refuse to stretch their hands towards them.

To convince you of the bad effects which may arise from a further indulgence of the delusion you have so unfortunately imbibed, the first leisure hour which presents itself, I will transcribe you the story of
Credulia;

Credulia; from her unhappy fate learn that Heaven destines only those to misery whose own endeavours are wanting to prevent it; and offers happiness to all who have resolution to make the purchase. Farewell; interested as I am in her felicity, I am sure my dear Morvina will believe me when I assure her, she reigns first in the friendship of her affectionate

ARDELIA.

THE

STORY OF CREDULIA.

IN A LETTER TO THE SAME.

I NOW, my dear Morvina, prepare to fulfil the promise made you in my last, which I flatter myself will have greater influence on your mind, from my assurances that the facts contained in the promised narrative are strictly true : as a further proof of it, know that the young gentleman, whose pensive features so much attracted your observation the last time you drank tea with me, is the same I shall, in the sequel of Credulia's story, mention under the name of Ferdinand. The recent marks of grief displayed on his expressive countenance, must convince you that a very short period has elapsed since the unfortunate fair one herself existed, and that, though the world of fiction affords us many moral subjects, we may in real life find many equally instructive.

ON

ON the banks of the flowing Avon, stands an elegant little villa, which for its innumerable beauties is largely indebted both to art and nature; yet so judiciously are they blended, that the latter triumphs over the artist's power, and while we contemplate on works of great expence, leaves us to suppose them the effects of chance. Beds glowing with Flora's gayest tribe, trees richly laden with ripening fruit, culinary and medicinal herbs are there indiscriminately united, the useful and agreeable join in one to please the eye and gratify the taste: in a word, nought there has place but what gives pleasure to the owner, because productive of conveniency to his neighbours. It is the abode of the hospitable, humane Alceſtus, at once the friend, physician, and patron of the village. What a pity that a heart so interested in the happiness of its fellow creatures, should in itself be wretched! but thus too often fares it with the best of men.

HE had once a daughter, blooming as the flowers which enamel his verdant meads, gentle as the zephyrs which fan the furrounding foliage : the days of her infancy were passed under the eye of maternal tenderness, and that tenderness was rewarded by the strictest attention to her duty and affection to her indulgent parents. Ten years had stolen along in feminine accomplishments and infantine sports, when death robbed her of the best of mothers ; the stroke was sudden, and the less supportable from being unexpected. Alceſtus, though a philosopher in most respects, was unequal to the shock ; he wept, not so much for himself, as for the young, the artless, and inexperienced Credulia, who, though her tears flowed as freely, was yet too young to be truly sensible of the loss she had sustained. As if conscious of the ills which afterwards occurred, he hung over her in agonies of woe, and while he gazed with pleasure on her growing beauties, petitioned Heaven

ven to grant her prudence equal to her charms.

THERE was at that time a maiden lady in the neighbourhood, who had ever shewn the tenderest regard for the lovely child; and persuading Alcestus that she could not with propriety be educated in his family after the decease of her worthy friend, took advantage of his grief, and in an evil hour, prevailed on him to resign her solely to her care. Alas! how incapable of the trust! in every respect the exact reverse of her departed mother. The instructions she bestowed, served only to destroy those pious maxims which had been before impressed. The conduct of Belinda was governed wholly by ridiculous prejudices, and absurd attentions to particular customs: she appeared like an indifferent piece of mechanism badly regulated, and in every part of her behaviour, shewed more regard to destiny than self-will; the former she believed in every respect irrevocable; and whatever misfortunes threatened her, it was seldom she could

be persuaded to exert the latter. It may, perhaps, appear strange that Alcestus should resign this inestimable jewel to one so ill adapted to the precious charge; but if we consider the painful state in which he must find himself on the death of a beloved wife, and his own incapacity to guide the steps of a child whose sex required the peculiar attentions of her own, it is not to be wondered that he should so readily accept Belinda's offer. Whatever her absurdities, she did not so openly expose them as to draw upon herself the censures they deserved; and the contiguity of her estate to that of Alcestus, rendered the situation more eligible to a father who wished frequently to embrace his child.

THE first five years of Belinda's guardianship were employed in conveying lessons that would have been more properly applied to womanhood, than the tender years of her amiable pupil. Instead of instructing her in the necessary duties of her sex, the accomplishments adapted to her
age

age and quality, she taught her to look upon nature as an unerring guide, and that whatever conduct it dictated, might with impunity be pursued; if she betrayed an aversion to any particular science, fate had never designed she should excel in it; if prompted, from the natural propensity youth has to pleasure, to attach herself more closely to any favourite diversion, fate was again referred to; in short, right or wrong, fate licensed all her actions. Persuaded that she had no power over herself, she believed it vain to oppose misfortune, or attempt the attainment of what was arduous. Thus, instead of cultivating the good propensions her mother had so early instilled into her heart, this unfortunate female yielded herself a prey to indolence and superstition.

ALCESTUS would sometimes remark that she neglected her improvement for frivolous amusements and pleasures ill befitted to her age; but whatever his arguments, Belinda always opposed them with one more prevalent: “Credulia’s

“genius was not that way turned, it led
 “her to other studies, and to persevere in
 “those in which fate ordained her not
 “to shine, was as absurd as to strive
 “against a stream.”

THOUGH conscious that she had not reason on her side, the natural complacency of his disposition permitted him not to exert that authority which every parent, under proper restrictions, should have over their children; he beheld with pain that his Credulia, in losing her mother, had been bereft of a treasure which never could be supplied; and saw, too late, that the substitute he had unfortunately made choice of, was of all others least capable of guiding inexperienced youth.

SOMETIMES he determined to let her remain no longer with Belinda, but something or other ever interfered to frustrate his intentions, until too late to eradicate follies which, from long indulgence, had become habitual. If ever he expressed a wish to take her home, it was so strenuously

ously opposed on both sides, that however determined, he could not long enough preserve the resolution. Belinda declared she could not exist without her child; and Credulia, conscious that she must necessarily experience more restraint under the eye of her father, wished naturally to continue in a situation in which she met with none.

To this mistaken fondness did the poor young lady owe those misfortunes which deprived her of felicity, and at length of life. Had she been less indulged, and educated free from those prejudices which unfortunately ruled the conduct of her friend, she might yet have been an ornament to society, and a blessing to her parent. Few, when they make choice of a guardian for their children, consult the most essential article required in such a trust; their greatest object is a person who will use them well, who will take care that their fortune is not dissipated, or themselves burdened with severity. Alas! are these the only requisites? ought not their principles

principles and manners to be our first consideration? If their lives are governed by any peculiar follies, are we not to expect that the example will be prevalent? for in general its influence is far more forcible than precept. It is possible that innate goodness of heart may be proof against its wiles; but though it triumphs over vice, it may bend to foibles; seeds of virtue early sown are not easily eradicated, but in time may be greatly weakened by the example of those about us, especially if it be one whose authority we are subject to; for it is but natural for youth to imagine, that the conduct of superior age is the rule from which they ought to form their own, and, till reason dawns upon their hearts, they discover not that they have copied after patterns unworthy imitation.

BUT I must leave digression, and return to the fair Credulia. At sixteen (an age of all others the most dangerous to our sex), she was left to follow the bent of those prejudices she had so unfortunately imbibed. A raging fever attacked Belinda,

da, and triumphed over her constitution with such rapidity, that she was confined no more than three days before numbered with the dead. Her mistaken fondness for the daughter of Alcestus ended not with life; when her will was opened, he beheld with sorrow that Credulia was mistress of fifteen thousand pounds, without even the restriction of a guardian till she became of age. Had he imagined any one could have been weak enough to make such an inconsiderate bequest, he would have taken care to have concealed it from the knowledge of his daughter; but as she was present at the opening of it, she was fully acquainted with her good fortune, or rather bad one, for all who hear the sequel must truly style it so.

AFTER the interment of Belinda, he prevailed on her once more to return to his paternal roof, and dispose of the house in which she lived; for the report of such an independent fortune, added to those charms which nature had so profusely bestowed on her, he dreaded would draw around
her

her a train of admirers, and deter her from the pursuit of those studies which, long neglected, he there wished her to improve. Alas! all his precautions availed but little. Her young heart, intoxicated with the idea of her own unlimited power, permitted her to attend to nothing serious. London and its diversions crowded her imagination; to reside in it was the summit of her wishes: and at length she became so strenuous in her intreaties, that all the arguments of her father served but to make her more desirous of becoming its inhabitant. He was constrained to indulge her. To have painted its dangers and temptations would have been but to have inflamed her more. He therefore calmly resigned the peaceful mansion where he had passed so many happy hours with his departed Mira, to the care of a trusty servant; and at the desire of the ill-fated beauty, hired a ready furnished house in one of the genteel squares in London.

THE servant which Credulia took to attend on her, had once lived in the service
of

of Belinda. Alceſtus rather wiſhed her to have taken any other, but it was in vain to adviſe: Nelly had greater accompliſhments than any one he could propoſe; none could be ſo proper as one who had lived with her from a child, and who was too well acquainted with her diſpoſition to do any thing contrary to its deſires; in fine, Nelly went with them, and determined that the fortune of her miſtreſs ſhould be the making of her own.

THE girl was ſhrewd, and had frequently obſerved that her lady placed the moſt implicit confidence in the decrees of fate; ſhe knew that ſhe would liſten with avidity to any thing which prognſticated future events, and determined to turn the ſoible to her own advantage. She had a lover who filled the humble ſtation of valet-de-chambre to a nobleman, and as money had greater influence over her mercenary heart, than the fidelity of which ſhe before had boaſted, reſolved to ſacrifice it to intereſt; and to that end pitched

pitched on him as the properest person to assist her in her plot.

THE man was personable, and had a tongue voluble as that which betrayed the innocence of our first parent; he was not to be twice told that a beautiful young lady with fifteen thousand pounds, was a prize worth contending for. He adored Nelly before for the easy admittance he gained to the store-room of her mistress, but much more for the proposal of gaining one to her heart and fortune.

AN eighth of Credulia's money was the price promised to be paid her the day on which her scheme succeeded; and as some little of the ready was necessary to equip Sharpwell for the character he was to assume, a casket of old-fashioned trinkets deposited in the hands of this faithful domestic, were pledged to supply immediate necessities. Affairs thus adjusted, Nelly began to enter on her operations. The young lady had often testified a desire of searching into futurity, to learn in what manner the destinies had disposed of her,
and

and doubted not but the death of Belinda, and her speedy removal to the metropolis, had actually been written in the book of fate. Whenever they were on the subject, her maid took care to encourage her in the wish, and as a further incitement, took an opportunity of throwing in her way some of those destructive hand-bills which are so profusely distributed among the youthful part of our sex (whose weakness, too often, renders them a prey to the deceptions).

SHE read them, and could hardly restrain her credulous wishes, in which her maid spared no pains to encourage her. One day, when they were chatting on the favourite topic, the girl declared that she herself had been foretold many remarkable events, and though a servant then, she sincerely believed it would one day or other be her fate to live in affluence; for the last time her fortune had been told, she had been informed that she was to live with a beautiful young lady, who would marry a foreign nobleman, and that she should

should afterwards travel with her to distant parts, and be equally fortunate in marrying herself.

“That certainly must be me,” cried the too credulous fair one, eagerly catching at the bait; “Where, dear Nelly, is
 “the person who told you so? was she
 “here, I do think, I should be tempted to
 “listen to her: but no (checking a roseate
 “blush), my papa says they are all impostors, and I must not give ear to them;
 “for though prepossessed with the opinion
 “that the destiny which presides
 “over us, must inevitably be accomplished, my own reason permits me not to
 “imagine that Providence has intrusted it
 “to any one.”

“O dear Madam,” exclaimed the artful girl, “my master would know nothing of
 “the matter; whether they are wise as they
 “pretend to be or not, it will be only diverting yourself a little; and if really
 “ignorant of what they affirm to know, it
 “will give you an opportunity of undeceiving others who rely on their prognostication.”

“ stication. How I should love to detect
 “ one of those impostors ! for instance
 “ now, was you to put on a plain ring, I
 “ dare say they would tell you———”

At that instant they were interrupted by Alceſtus, who every morning paid his daughter a viſit in her dreſſing-room. He came to acquaint her that he had juſt received a letter from a friend, who had many years been abſent from his native land, but was now returning with a ſon whom he had educated abroad, and with whoſe encomiums the letter was ſo replete that it left hardly room for any other ſubject. The young gentleman,” continued this affectionate father, “ was very amiable when he left England, and if as much improved as my friend’s partiality makes mention, muſt indeed be an accompliſhed youth. I muſt beſpeak his friendſhip for my dear Credulia, that of a worthy man is ever deſireable to your ſex, both from the ſatisfaction their ſociety produces, and for the diſtance at which it keeps thoſe whoſe inferior

“ rior

“rior merit entitles them not so much to
 “your esteem. I anticipate with pleasure
 “the day of their arrival. Our house is
 “extensive, and till Mandeville’s is ready,
 “they shall reside with us. You, my dear,
 “will, I am sure, assist me in making
 “welcome the friends I so much regard.”

CREDULIA replied with her wonted
 complacency, that the friends of her parent
 would be ever estimable to her heart. And
 Alceſtus, being in great good humour, seat-
 ed himself by her, and began converſing
 on indifferent topics, which for that time
 prevented a renewal of the ſubject which
 her maid had been ſo induſtrious in intro-
 ducing. It however prevented her not
 from perfevering in her plot, which (her
 miſtreſs being that afternoon engaged to
 drink tea with a young lady in the ſquare)
 ſhe had an opportunity of putting into
 immediate execution.

EMBRACING the firſt moment of her
 abſence, ſhe flew to Stanhope-Street, and
 there meeting with the well-known Sibyl,
 informed her of all ſhe wiſhed to be ac-
 compliſhed

complished in the destiny of Credulia; but artfully supposing that there would be some difficulty in persuading her to seek the knowledge of it, was determined to take her unawares, and to that end prevailed upon Magicia to attend her home.

AFTER regaling her guest with tea and coffee (which she took care to treat her with in the apartment of her lady), the china was removed to make room for the magical preparations, which Mrs. Nelly was also careful to have in full display at the period she expected Credulia would return.

ON observing her entering the room, a well concerted bustle, and face crimsoned with confusion betrayed some secret machinations; Magicia was thrust into the china closet, and herself busied in concealing the scattered spells which overspread the table, but not in so great a hurry but her mistress had first taken a survey of them.

SHE

SHE naturally inquired what had been in agitation, and with a countenance expressive of displeasure, averred that she had a transient glance of some one besides her maid on entering the door of her apartment. With well feigned trepidation the girl owned the Sibyl had been there, but that fearful of her displeasure, she had sent her out of the room. “She has told
“ me, Madam, such things! (observing
“ that the countenance of her lady recovered its serenity) as would quite surprise
“ you; she knows even more than I am
“ acquainted with myself.”

“WHY did you send her away?” replied Credulia “if not gone too far, let
“ her be recalled; I want not to be acquainted with my fate, but to see what
“ kind of a being it is who pretends to
“ such superior knowledge.”

THIS was the thing she wished for, and begging ten thousand pardons for the liberty she had taken, Mrs. Nelly opened the closet door, and told Magicia she had leave to enter the presence of her mistress.

CREDULIA

CREDULIA stood amazed, she expected to have seen Chamont's Hag, "thrivell'd with care, and with old age grown double;" instead of which she beheld a genteel looking female, in the prime of life, and dressed in a fashionable dishabille; her countenance betrayed ill health, but there was nothing in her whole appearance which testified a greater share of knowledge than Providence dispenses to the generality of mankind. It was with difficulty the young lady could be persuaded that it was the same in whose encomiums her maid had been so lavish. But the Sibyl, unintimidated by her scrutinizing glances, begged to have the honour of casting her nativity; and added, that even princes had from her sought to learn their destiny, with which she flattered herself not an inhabitant of the terrestrial globe was half so well acquainted.

With heart irresolute, Credulia refused to hear her; but the persuasive tongue of one too well acquainted with her foibles, soon overthrew her weak resolves. She
seated

seated herself at the table, and mentioning the date and hour of her birth, prepared to listen to events of which (from the prejudices she had imbibed) her maid was convinced she would not attempt to avoid the accomplishment.

BEFORE informed of what she was to say, the vile impostor with much solemnity acquainted her, That on a certain day she should be walking in the Park, and should there be accosted by a gentleman (of whom she drew the most flattering description from one before given her by Nelly); she added, that he was a foreign nobleman in disguise, who for particular reasons was obliged to conceal his rank; that he had frequently seen her, and, enamoured of her person, would join her in her walk, for the better opportunity of discovering whether her mental qualifications were equal to her personal; and that both would be mutually pleased with the converse of each other. But that urgent reasons precluding an open avowal of their affection,

affection, they would be constrained to keep it secret till after marriage.

CREDULIA refused to hear more: she declared, that though she believed fate to be inevitable, she could never think it possible that she should marry without the concurrence of her papa; yet, notwithstanding the asseveration, secretly thought that if the destinies had so decreed, all the precaution in the world would avail her nothing; and though she appeared to pay but little regard to the prognostications of Magicia, determined not to be absent from the Park the day on which it was foretold that she should meet a lover.

As it was fixed at the tedious distance of a week, the intervening moments hung heavy on her hands, and would have done much more so but for the uncommon assiduity she discovered in preparing for her appearance, which, as a proof of her credulity, she took care should be more than usually elegant and attractive. When the morn arrived, she arose before her accustomed hour, and so eagerly antici-

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pated

pated the joys of admiration, that she would hardly allow herself time to drink her chocolate. Alceſtus obſerved the impatience ſo viſible on her expreſſive features, and remarked alſo the early attendance ſhe had paid her toilet; with the moſt tender ſolicitude he inquired whither ſhe was going, and received an answer which at once ended his interrogatories; “She purpoſed paying a viſit to Lady Mortlake, a particular friend of the deceaſed Belinda;” which ſhe in reality meant to do, but not till ſhe had firſt taken a turn or two in the Mall.

WITH palpitating heart and eager ſtep ſhe directed her courſe towards the Park. Sharpwell was there before her; his dreſs was calculated to attract the eye, his figure noble as the character he aſſumed. She ſoon remarked him, the external gaiety of his perſon rendered him conſpicious among the throng, and the attention he paid her as ſhe paſſed, convinced her too credulous mind that he was a lover deſtined her by Heaven.

AFTER

AFTER some time passed in distant admiration, he ventured to pursue her steps, and determined to be satisfied whether she really was the object of his attachments. She seated herself on a bench, where (with the effrontery for which the Hibernians are remarked) he took the liberty of placing himself by her. Common-place observations on the weather, the company, and other matters equally insignificant, for some minutes employed the powers of speech, during which he took an opportunity of persuading her of the inferiority of other beauties which passed them, to her by whom he had the peculiar happiness of being then seated. Though accustomed to adulation, the poison sunk deep into her heart; she either had never been so agreeably flattered, or was never in better humour to be deceived. Propriety permitted her not long to keep her seat; but when she quitted it, her countenance shewed a tacit confession that he might attend her without offending; and so rapid a progress had he made in her unsuspect-

ing heart, that she left him in Spring Gardens with visible reluctance; nor had power to utter a refusal when entreated to repeat her walk the ensuing day.

As soon as the superstitious maid arrived at home, she flew into her dressing-room, and throwing herself upon a sofa, “I have
“seen him,” cried she; “the very object
“so truly described to me by Magicia last
“Monday! who would have believed her
“possessed of such a secret? I would give
“the world to know if the other part of my
“destiny will as truly be accomplished.”

“Seen who, Madam?” cried Nelly (artfully pretending to have forgot the day)
“I thought you had been gone to visit
“Lady Mortlake.”

“Stupid girl! do you forget the lover
“I was to meet in the Park to-day? curiosity alone prompted me to go, for I
“really believed her an impostor; but
“sure as fate, she has more knowledge
“than I am aware of, for before I had
“taken one turn, the gentleman described
“appeared upon the walk.”

EVERY

EVERY thing was then related as it had occurred ; to which her maid (though before as well acquainted with it as herself) listened with much attention and seeming astonishment. The better to prevent a suspicion of her perfidy, she pretended not to believe it was in reality the person alluded to ; and Credulia, impatient at her unbelief, insisted that Magicia should be again applied to. She was immediately sent for, and according to her instructions told the young lady, that at their next interview, my Lord would discover his rank, and would present her with a gold etwee : that about a week afterwards, affairs of state would recall him to his native country, and that unless immediately concluded, their marriage would be deferred till his return to England ; for the planets had decreed, that if not a bride at seventeen, she would remain single till seven-and-twenty.

THE latter part of this prediction was not the least propitious to the features of Credulia, who (though she wished not to

be early married (thought the period mentioned by Magicia rather a too tedious one. With incredible anxiety she asked, if fate had really destined him to be her husband? and being answered in the affirmative, concluded in her mind that she might as well accept him then, as wait till his return, and dismissing the Sibyl with a handsome present, resolved not to oppose what Providence had decreed.

DURING her visit at Lady Mortlake's, the unfortunate girl could with difficulty conceal her pleasurable sensations. And while she was amusing herself with the anticipation of the morrow, her treacherous maid and the pretended nobleman were secretly triumphing in the success of their diabolical scheme: the latter, to impress her with the idea of his rank, would not accept of the etwée provided by Nelly, but ordered an elegant one of his master's goldsmith.

At the promised period, they both were punctual to their appointment; Sharpwell with well feigned diffidence ventured,
after

after a short time passed in her society, to aver a passion which he declared had long possessed him, but which he was constrained to smother, until the present happy moment; he had even the assurance to affirm that her own shadow had not more constantly attended her at every public place than he had done for some weeks past; but that the crowd of admirers with which she was continually surrounded, gave him no opportunity of paying his devoirs.

THE credulous fair one gave credit to his flattering assurances, and when, at parting, he pressed her to accept the trifling testimony of his friendship, refused him not; entirely prepossessed that there could be no impropriety in receiving a present from the man whom Heaven had appointed for her husband.

IN short, one interview produced another, till under pretence of being soon recalled from England, he prevailed on her to consent to a clandestine marriage; and the poor young lady, little thinking that she was going to unite herself to an impostor,

in an evil hour resigned herself to wretchedness.

WHEN she had consented to be his, the various conflicts which agitated her tender bosom, nearly deprived her of her reason; torn between a fatal attachment to his person, a blind reliance on the destinies, and her affection to the best of parents, she knew not a moment's happiness during the intervening moments; a thousand times was she prompted to rely upon the tenderness of her father, and acquaint him with her folly (still firmly thinking that nothing could prevent a marriage registered in heaven); but the false shame arising from the thoughts of owning herself in an error, precipitated her into one still greater; in a word, she wedded Sharpwell, and the good Alcesteus knew not even that his daughter had a lover.

Six weeks had elapsed in stolen interviews before any one besides her maid had knowledge of their marriage, he then began to grow impatient for the possession
of

of her fortune, which, exclusive of a few hundreds expended in pocket money, as yet remained untouched. What was to be done? though conscious her father could not withhold it from her, it was impossible to become mistress of it without discovering the step which she had taken; and to which (though still ignorant of the deception which had been practised against her) she felt the greatest repugnance.

REPEATED evasions at length determined him to assume the husband and himself demand it, which Credulia, trembling for the event, presumed not to oppose. What a cruel stroke! while Alcestus was anticipating in idea an alliance with the amiable son of Mandeville, his daughter's fortune was claimed by one at whose connections worth must shudder.

WORDS are insufficient to paint his horrors, when he found her hand disposed of in this clandestine manner! but when he found it disposed of to a sharper, the shock was near fatal to his life. He however resigned her fortune without reproaches,

and while he tenderly chid her for her imprudence, told her, that though he never could look upon the man she had married as his son, he would endeavour never to forget she was his daughter; and when surrounded by the adversity such an union threatened, assured her, if she thought proper to seek it, she should ever find an asylum under his paternal roof.

TILL that fatal moment, the unfortunate beauty knew not that she had fallen a sacrifice to her own credulity, and the idea of such a cruel deception, immediately converted that affection for her husband (which she in reality only felt because she believed it her fate to do) into the most extreme disgust; she yielded her fortune without reluctance, but would never afterwards be prevailed upon to see him; not even at his departure from England, which he soon left to dissipate, in his own country, riches he so ill deserved.

NELLY, conscious that her treachery must be discovered, left her mistress on some frivolous pretence the day before her
marriage

marriage was disclosed; and after claiming her share of the booty, set off for France, alarmed least her perfidy should meet the punishment it so justly merited. But she needed not to have flown; Alcestus was not of a disposition to seek revenge, however grossly injured; and though he could not help secretly execrating the betrayers of his child, accused himself as the primary cause of her misfortunes, in having suffered her to remain so long under the guardianship of Belinda, whose mistaken fondness he had often too truly predicted would end in misery to herself.

CREDULIA, humbled to the dust, was no more seen in public, but having prevailed on her father to return with her to that abode she had but a year before quitted with such extreme delight; devoted her short remains of life to unavailing tears and penitence.

Soon after their retreat, Mandeville returned to England, and finding that his friend had retired from the metropolis, sought him in the shades of rural quiet.

How

How painful was their meeting! their wishes respecting their children had been mutual, and mutual was their disappointment. Ferdinand had been taught to expect in Credulia all that is lovely in her sex, and such he found her; but misery to his too susceptible heart! found her wedded to another.

HER constitution, naturally delicate, was unequal to the shock; reflection instead of proving a balm augmented the disease, and to find herself fruitlessly beloved, put the finishing stroke to her misfortune. To have destroyed her own happiness was an idea sufficiently depressing, but to have been a source of misery to others was still more insupportable; she regretted not so much her declining health, as the uneasiness it was productive of to the best of fathers! to think that instead of being the solace of his age, she had empoisoned all his joy, and by so unworthily uniting herself, disappointed his dearest hopes, was a consideration that permitted her not a moment's peace. In vain did she endeavour
to

to suppress her grief, to avoid the augmentation of his; the greater her endeavours to conceal it, the more it preyed upon her spirits; and within ten months after her marriage, put a final period to her existence.

FROM her example learn, ye too credulous fair ones! that the knowledge of futurity is of all others least worthy your pursuit. Even would reason permit us to believe that Heaven has invested any particular order of beings with its events, it would be an absurdity to search into them; by doing it we deprive ourselves of life's choicest blessing, the balmy soother hope; without which even an exemption from its ills would hardly make us happy. Unexpected pleasure ever exceeds that we long anticipate, by dwelling on it in idea we exhaust the satisfaction; and frequently, when arrived at the desired period, exclaim with Solomon, That all is vanity.

IF Providence ordains that misfortunes should attend us, is it not early enough to feel them when they arrive? what satisfaction

faction can there be in taking up the burthen before it falls on us? but reason must, I am sure, dictate a contrary belief, though felicity rests not on ourselves, it is in the power of every one to aim at the possession of it, and can be merited only by our endeavours to attain it.

HAD Credulia been educated under the inspection of one unbiaſſed by this fatal ſuperſtition, ſhe would have been guarded againſt the deceptions of mankind, and muſt have diſcovered that ſecreſy is very ſeldom required in an honourable attachment. Her natural good ſenſe would have convinced her, that it was neceſſary to be acquainted with the character and connections of her lover, before ſhe blindly yielded him her hand, and probably ſuch an inquiry would have ſaved her from deſtruction. But truſting to that inviſible power, which, though it permits imprudence, never deſigns it, ſhe attempted not to oppoſe a deſtiny that muſt at once rob her father of his peace, and herſelf of that

that consideration and obedience every worthy daughter owes her parents.

I HAVE not time to add more, but shall leave my dear Morvina to make her own reflections on the above; if it answers, in the most trifling degree, the end for which it was related, shall think myself peculiarly fortunate in having transcribed it for her perusal, and am with much sincerity,

&c. &c.

ARDELIA,

LETTER

LETTER VII.

FROM ELVIRA TO HER BROTHER.

On Genius.

YOU have often, my dear Honestus, regretted that the gifts of genius should be so unequally dispensed; yet as often have remarked, that those peculiarly distinguished by its favours are very rarely favourites of fortune. Is not that alone a consideration sufficient to restrain our envy (even had we not, frequently, examples that the finest talents are prostituted to the vilest ends); for few, however desirous of wisdom, would wish to become the prey of poverty.

GENIUS is only worthy admiration when united with discretion and a virtuous heart, but how seldom such an union happens, our own observations and experience must

every

every day convince us. Many there are in the world who, though celebrated by the trump of fame, would, from the profligacy of their lives, disgrace a station far inferior to that in which they shine. The theory of virtue is far different from the practice; many possess the former, who are totally deficient in the duties of the latter; and however inconsistent it may appear, a descriptive and warm imagination is frequently accompanied by an unfeeling heart. How apt are we (while our eyes are roving over the poetic page, or contemplating the painter's animated art) to conclude, that virtue must be felt e'er it can be well described. Alas! how much we err; it is with that as with grief, often felt most when least expressed. To form a true idea of mankind, we should look into their private characters, not into their public ones: he who lives in the continual practice of good works, is far more enviable than him who, to excel in one peculiar science or profession, suffers every other useful talent to lay dormant.

A MAN

A MAN may be great without being good; the former is accepted by a misjudging world as an apology for the latter, and he who possesses of virtue the shadow only, is often far more carested than he who has the substance. It is a truth, though a melancholy one, that those who pretend most to the propagation of goodness, are sometimes those who live most in opposition to its tenets; whose lives and works form the greatest contrast. It is ungenerous, you'll perhaps say, to form general inferences from a few unfortunate examples; but observation must convince us, that vice is more frequently derived from superior genius than moderate abilities. It is often affirmed, that it must be a wise man who can play the part of a fool or madman; so also must it be a great understanding that is capable of extreme villainy. A person destitute of art will never sink into errors from which he is conscious he has not sufficient ingenuity to extricate himself; it requires but little wisdom to know, that punishment is the
consequence

consequence of crimes, and though his principles may not prompt him to dread that of a future state, he will be careful to avoid that of the present. When I hear parents applauding little tricks of cunning in their children, it pains me beyond expression; alas! they consider not that art is almost as incompatible with innocence as flattery with true friendship; and that goodness of heart never appears to greater advantage, than when dressed in the simple robes of truth and candour.

EVERY one must naturally wish their offspring to be endued with the gifts of sense, but none who truly study their happiness will wish them either peculiarly witty or ingenious. Good sense will guard them from error, and teach them properly to conduct themselves either in affluence or adversity; while on the contrary, superior talents frequently precipitate them into it, and lead them to attain prosperity, or avoid misfortune, by arts which must debase a Christian, and which end in the total

total ruin of themselves, and misery to the unfortunate authors of their being.

You will wonder at the gravity of my style, but indeed, my dear Honestus, I frequently reflect with pain on a subject which I know to you is a source of pleasure and delight; to imbitter that satisfaction you may perhaps think cruel, but friendship requires a truth few would dare to tell you; virtue has with me the preference to genius. To encourage the former should be the duty of every parent, though unaccompanied by the latter; think then how painful must be my sensations, when I behold the evident partiality with which you gaze on the early productions of your little Edmond, while the inferior talents of his elder brother are frequently a subject of pity and contempt. Though Alfred may not possess the abilities of Edmond, I cannot help predicting, that his amiable disposition will afford you more real comfort than the superior advantage of his brother. The admiration bestowed on the latter will
render

render him inattentive to those virtues peculiarly deserving cultivation, while the former, unaccustomed to praise, will study to deserve it; and though he may not be a great, will be a worthy man.

I HOPE it will be unnecessary ever to repeat my sentiments on a partiality your own good sense must convince you is ill-placed; parents should have none: or if some involuntary impulse attaches them more strongly to one child than another, they should be cautious to prevent the preference becoming visible, as the advantage of such a concealment is on both sides obvious. I could add much more on the subject, but am interrupted by company. Pardon, dear Honestus, a freedom which proceeds from the strongest attachment to yourself and children, and believe me, with much sincerity,

your affectionate

ELVIRA.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

T O M E L I S S A.

On Envy.

YOU ask me, dear Melissa, what amusement I found in my late excursion, and are impatient for a description of the characters to whom Lady Mildmay has introduced me. In answer to the first part of your inquiries, I can assure you much, or my visit would not have been so far prolonged beyond the intended period, but the latter is a subject on which I may perhaps acquit myself with less facility.

BEFORE I enter on such a task, ought I not carefully to examine my own heart, to be sure that it is neither perverted by envy, or biaſſed by partiality? for peculiar attachment to any particular object frequently blinds us to real merit, while the foibles of a favourite are entirely overlooked.

looked. To know ourselves, appears a species of knowledge not difficult to attain, yet I believe it less easily acquired than any other; though I cannot accuse myself of any of those little feminalities, those scandalous propensities which so often degrade our sex; I may perhaps in the eyes of others be as greatly infected with them as the most censorious of my acquaintance; for the poet certainly has some degree of reason on his side when he avers that,

The faults of our neighbours with freedom we blame,
But tax not ourselves though we practice the same.

HOWEVER numerous may be mine, I affirm with much truth, that I never attempt to give a character either of the male sex or my own, but with a caution which renders me a very indifferent painter; for the fear of exaggerating follies, and the pleasure I feel in expatiating on virtues, render me unjust to both, and deprives

prives the portrait of its principal attraction, as the chief merit of descriptions consists in the affinity they bear to truth.

AFTER giving you such an indifferent opinion of my descriptive talents, is it possible, my dear Melissa, that you can propose to yourself either satisfaction or amusement from my answer to your inquiries? But convinced that there is nothing so impatient, so insatiable as curiosity, I shall enter on my task, before your better judgment has determined the point in question: but remember, it will rather be a journal of my own transactions and ideas, than a criticism on those of others.

You are not unacquainted with the motives of my going to London, at a season in which all the world were retreating from it; the anniversary of my sisters nuptials (alas! ill fated ones I fear) admitted of no excuse; for Sir Edward's unfortunate partiality for the smoaky regions permitted us not to celebrate them at their country seat. From the intense heat of the weather, I expected nobody
of

of any consequence would have personally paid their congratulations; but allowing for the emptiness of the town, I never saw a private assembly more crowded or more brilliant.

I FEAR, my dear Meliffa, that the Baronet's attention to the gaming-tables detaches him too much from the society of his lady. Poor Caroline welcomed me with an unusual dejection upon her expressive features; I thought I could read in them a heart oppressed amidst the general joy, and that her smiles were rather those of complacency than a mind at ease. I, however, dared not to hint my suspicions of her unhappiness, for I am sensible the extreme delicacy of her disposition would not suffer her to expose the foibles of her husband even to a sister. There are few cases in which I am a friend to reserve, but in such a one as her's, I hold it infinitely better than a too communicative temper.

It may be true, that the disclosure of woe relieves the heart, but at the same

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time

time it frequently augments the misery. Advice is generally the return of unlimited confidence, and the consequence of such advice often terminates in the ruin of those whom it is meant to serve. If we observe dejection in a friend, it is much more prudent to aim at the dissipation of it, than by inquiries, which can be of no real benefit to ourselves, renew a grief we may be unable to remove. This was my reflection when I beheld the too visible depression of my sister, and the conduct I observed was agreeable to its dictates.

THE evening of my arrival her Ladyship was alone, a happiness as extraordinary as unexpected; for the relations of Sir Edward (who were ever partial to his choice) very seldom permit her to pass a day without their company. The attention with which I gazed upon her altered countenance as she led me to her dressing-room, recalled a momentary glow into her once roseate cheeks: she observed the stifled sigh as I embraced her, and to turn my attention from herself, began to talk

of

of my Melissa. Though anxious to dive into the cause of her hidden grief, I honoured and adored her for her prudence, and my curiosity, as if it had never been awakened, immediately died away. Knowing how much she interests herself in every thing which relates to the companions of her childhood, in hopes of amusing, I related to her the accident which led to the marriage of our friend Maria, my attempts succeeded, and the dear girl owned with glistening eyes, that she had never since her marriage passed an evening half so satisfactory or agreeable. Her domestic serious turn of mind, cannot even reconcile itself by custom to those tumultuous pleasures she has reluctantly engaged in since her union with Sir Edward, and while hurried from one scene of dissipation to another, her heart secretly pines for the joys of solitude.

On the day of jubilee, Lord and Lady Foible (whose characters it is needless to describe, as fame has wings which must have far outstretched the pen of your

Olivia) were first to pay their compliments, and with them their amiable ward, a young lady, not only lovely in person, but in mind so truly estimable that even scandal with its edged tongue could never yet depreciate. At my intercession, Lady Mildmay prevailed on them to permit her to continue with us during my stay in town, and I was not disappointed of the satisfaction I proposed myself in her society, for her conversable and social qualifications so far exceeded those of all our other visitors, that they afforded me a constant source of pleasure and amusement.

It is to me astonishing that a mind so young and inexperienced should preserve its native sensibility and purity, after having been so long habituated to the conversation of insensibles and triflers; for even those on whom reason has shed its brightest beams, are sometimes perverted by the force of custom. Was you to see the ease, good nature, and yet determined spirit with which she excuses herself from complying with any of their absurdities,

to

to which her discretion cannot reconcile her, you would indeed, my Melissa, be charmed as much as I am, for affability is doubly pleasing when accompanied with a resolution too determinate to be biaſſed by the opinion of others in opposition to its own.

THERE was alſo among our company ſeveral other very reſpectable characters, Lord Beville, Miſs Manſel, a Mr. Brudnel, and many more; but to attempt a particular deſcription of them, after that of the engaging Iſabella, would be a compliment as ill paid to their perſons as underſtandings, for both, though ſuch as render them very agreeable companions, fall as infinitely ſhort of her, as they roſe ſuperior to thoſe of other triflers. After the day of ceremony and parade was over, the largeſt part of our company left us, and from being more circumscribed, it became far more pleaſing. Each had then an opportunity of appearing to their natural advantage; and as an unuſual ſimilarity of ſentiment happened to reign among us,

we were never without resources for amusement. Cards, as drugs totally destructive to the joys of conversation, were entirely banished from our society, and to fill up the hours of *ennui* (if such dare intrude where all was mirth and innocence) we had recourse to books; though in justice to my friends, must acknowledge that the general fund of wit and cheerfulness rendered every other aid unnecessary.

ONE evening after tea, Lady Mildmay, happening to be in a moralizing humour, begged leave to introduce a question she had long wished to hear debated; every one readily bowed assent, and Caroline rising from her chair, with a dignity peculiar to herself, asked What passion most debased the human mind, and was of all others most destructive to our sex.

MISS MANSEL being the senior female in the room, it was her turn first to answer; and with a blush which testified a diffidence of her oratorical abilities, she said that her ideas led her to suppose it Avarice,

rice, but begged to be excused from a more minute discussion of the argument.

MR. BRUDNEL next affirmed it to be Love; your Olivia, Ambition; but the more sensible, more judicious Isabella, declared it to be Envy.

PARDON me, Ladies and Gentlemen, said she, for opposing to your answers an argument I may perhaps but ill support; my opinion is founded on observation only, but the little I have made leads me to imagine that no passion either so much debases the human mind, or is half so destructive to female happiness as the power of envy. Love, instead of debasing, generally ennobles the disposition, and is, in generous minds, the strongest incentive that can move the soul to laudable accomplishments; animated by love, the most timid are inspired with valour, the indolent with activity, and it frequently proves a source of knowledge in minds the most illiberal and uninformed; it sometimes even expands and humanizes the hearts of usurers, and in proportion to

the merit of its object, is productive of its good or bad effects; but if I may rely on my own speculations, the bad in general are far outbalanced by the good. Those who speak from experience may possibly be better able to decide the point, I shall therefore quit the subject for ambition, which comes very nearly within the same predicament; and of which there are such numerous kinds, that it can only be styled destructive according to its various operations on different dispositions, like love, it prompts both to virtue and to vice. One day we have instances of its tempting mankind to acts of cruelty and ingratitude; another, to actions which immortalize their names; a mind totally exempt from it can rise to no perfection, nor can one in which its influence predominates too greatly be truly estimable: it is with that as every other propensity of the heart, a just medium is essential to our happiness, but if carried to excess, renders us detestable. I must therefore, with submission to the opinion of the
company,

company, take the liberty of declaring that I look upon both ambition and love to be very foreign to the passion which her Ladyship alludes to.

IN deference to Miss Mansel's judgment, I must allow her answer, (though not a decisive one) to be much more consistent with the dictates of reason than either of the former; avarice certainly destroys the finer feelings, shuts the heart to pity, and frequently prompts mankind to sacrifice their real good for a bauble, which affords them no substantial happiness; its insatiable cravings deadens the soul to every social virtue, and renders even the pangs of death more poignant; for the uncertainty of a future state, has often far less weight upon mercenary minds, than the thoughts of leaving behind them their ill-gotten hoards. But as this is a passion confined to neither sex, and generally the consequence of advancing years rather than youth and beauty, I cannot deem it peculiarly destructive to female happiness, though it undoubtedly

is debasive to every one on whom it happens to operate too powerfully.

ENVY is, according to my ideas, the passion most destructive to our felicity, and which most strongly influences us to injure that of other people; like the canker worm which lurks beneath the blooming rose-bud, it undermines our health, and imperceptibly deprives us of our good humour and our beauty, for be the latter ever so resplendent, it ceases to be attractive when the former has forsaken us. True felicity consists rather in idea than reality, we are happy so long as we believe others not more happy than ourselves; but when once imagination with its idle chimeras begins to prompt a different opinion, we may bid farewell to peace. An envious mind extracts its joys from a source which affords pity only in a generous soul; the merit it cannot equal it endeavours to depreciate, and sickens even at the praises of its dearest friend. Could we envy without being censorious, this malignant passion would cease to be so generally destructive; but

but the misfortune is, that instead of giving birth to emulation, it ever begets aversion to its object, and so assiduous is it in self-tormenting, that it not only beholds superior excellences with jaundiced eyes, but decries them even where they in reality never had existence. Just as Isabella had proceeded thus far in her argument, a card from Lady Foible, acquainting her of the sudden illness of his Lordship, and also requesting her immediate return, deprived us of the satisfaction of hearing it more fully discussed, but every one present readily yielded to her the palm of merit.

WHEN I retired to my apartment, I could not avoid making some serious reflections on a subject I had never before considered in so just a light; many were the examples which presented themselves to my imagination, of reputations ruined, fortunes dissipated, and friendships broken by this injurious vice. The breast in which it rankles is at open war with all mankind, for as it is impossible, however miserable

miserable ourselves, to look around us without beholding miseries greater than our own; so is it equally impossible for an envious person to look among their acquaintance, and not discover some of them superiorly happy; a suggestion which at once empoisons all the felicity they before enjoyed. If envy is excited by magnificence, it prompts a desire of excelling, even at the ruin of our fortunes; if by superior wealth, to attain an equal share by means too frequently debasing and unwarrantable.

THE unrestrained liberty of others, is to some of our sex a much greater source of uneasiness than their own confinement; to free themselves from a bondage painful only in idea, they sacrifice their interest, reputation, and every good in life, for no other consideration than the sole pleasure of doing as they please; a satisfaction which when once enjoyed ceases to appear one. Indeed so numerous are the follies and indiscretions to which it subjects

jects us, that it is almost impossible to particularize them.

Our most valuable friends are, from its baleful influence, converted into the worst of foes; alike insensible to the luxuries of sympathy, and the lively pleasures of participation, we can neither feel for their misfortunes, or rejoice in their successes. It renders us not only unjust to merit, but injurious also, and with a view of levelling, we endeavour to take from them a treasure which enriches not ourselves, but renders them poor indeed! Alas! my dear Melissa, how many are there, only within the narrow sphere of our acquaintance, who have proved to us the force of envy, when it operates too powerfully on a female mind; be the object of it ever so deserving admiration, the crime of outshining us is of itself sufficient to excite our malice, and though perhaps too young in the school of censure to venture at open unblushing scandal, we scruple not to wound like an arrow in the dark, and by distant hints and well-timed whispers lay a foundation

a foundation for suspicions, which once awakened, never can be quelled

EVEN could we allow it possible to envy without attempting to depreciate, yet those whose dispositions are naturally averse to censure, are so greatly vitiated by its influence, that though they may be scrupulous of propagating an injurious report, are not too conscientious to listen to it with pleasure; and though perhaps sensible that it is neither consistent with probability or the general character of the traduced, have neither a sufficient share of candour or good nature to attempt their vindication. Were we to reflect but for a moment, how unequal is the momentary triumph we enjoy in destroying the credit of our neighbours, to that of endeavouring to establish our own by a series of good actions; the former would employ the greater portion of our time, and the latter be deemed a pursuit entirely unworthy a reasonable being. All the happiness we could possibly acquire by excelling either in beauty, wealth, or grandeur, is far inferior

ferior to that of an unfullied conscience, and a heart which can retire into itself, and find nothing in the course of its self examination in which it has swerved either from honour, truth, or justice. In a word, all other happiness is ideal, but that we experience from regulating our conduct by the grand rule of life, that of doing by others as we wish they should do unto us.

INSTEAD of giving you an account of my visit, you will begin to imagine me writing a dissertation on the passions; but as the first part of my letter plainly expressed that you must expect rather to be entertained with my ideas and sentiments, than a narrative of facts, in which there was too little variety to admit of much amusement, I shall forbear every apology for disappointing you on that head, and conclude with observing, that though I fail in one respect, I have most implicitly obeyed you in the other; for I am convinced, whatever your complaints, that of the shortness of this epistle will not be one among the number.

I VERY

I VERY soon propose myself the happiness of personally assuring you, how much I am my dear Melissa's most affectionate

and devoted friend,

O L I V I A.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

TO A YOUNG LADY,

Upon her Entrance into Life.

YOU are going, my dear young friend, to make your entrance into a world, of the customs, opinions, and manners of which you are utterly unacquainted, and can form still less ideas of its dangers and deceptions. Attached to you by the tender ties of kindred, and more so by those of friendship, I wish in some degree to supply to you the attention of an amiable mother snatched from you in infancy; but whose virtues, though deprived of her example, will, I flatter myself, entail on you a blessing. From the information of your father, I have learnt that a few months hence restores you to your friends, and that your education being completed, you will quit the sequestered walls of a convent

vent for the society of mankind. The anxiety I have for your happiness, has induced me to throw together my sentiments concerning the regulation of your future conduct, which I doubt not will do equal credit to the station in which (by the indulgence of the best of parents) you will soon be placed, as in that in which you have passed the happy days of childhood.

I SAY happy, Ariane, because it is a period of all others the flight of which is most sincerely to be regretted, but which (insensible of the blessing) we are most in haste to dissipate; our wishes on that head even outstretch the wings of time; nor is it till the experience of riper years convinces us of our error, that we perceive its worth. The days of womanhood, though so eagerly anticipated, are days of trouble; if amiable in person, our most innocent pleasures are annoyed by censure, and however irreproachable we think our conduct, envy is seldom without a shaft to wound our happiness.

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THE public character of your father will subject you to a multiplicity of company, which though retirement might better suit your temper, it will be your province to entertain. Remember, my dear, that novelty has ever with mankind a prevailing charm, and was you even far less entitled to admiration, you might expect on your first appearance in the world, a large share of attention both from the male sex and your own; the one will overwhelm you with unmeaning, and far-fetched compliments, the other with professions of friendship which flow simply from the lips, while their hearts remain uninterested, but which from the inexperience of your's you will credit as sincere. Should you have the good fortune to select some one among them who is an exemption to this rule, treat her with the distinction she deserves; a true friend is one of nature's choicest gifts; to preserve which we cannot shew ourselves too assiduous. One nearly of your own age and disposition, to whom you might confide with safety your
 most

most secret thoughts, would be productive of much advantage to you who are at present far less skilled in the practical part of life than in its theory; by accustoming yourself to hide nothing from her, you would acquire an habitual mode of thinking and acting with propriety; she would correct your taste, improve your genius, and by her agreeable converse fit you for the pleasures of society, without assuming the austerity of maturer age, or that superiority of wisdom which generally renders advice disgusting. In giving you this portrait of a female friend, I have my eye upon Lady Caroline B * * *, as the nearest relation of your mother; she is worthy your tenderest esteem, and doubly entitled to it from her own intrinsic merit. She will be one of the first to congratulate you on your return, but perhaps the last to solicit your particular friendship; for the fear of being confounded with the multitude will render her more scrupulous of displaying her social qualifications than those who profess fewer; and her regard
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to delicacy restrain her from attributing to you an hundredth part of those perfections which others may perhaps enumerate without discerning. She is not one of those women who, from their external appearance, attracts a large share of our attention at the first *coup d'oeil*; on her first visit she will appear to you respectable; on her second, amiable; and on a more intimate acquaintance, worthy of the most distinguished place in your esteem and confidence. In a word, you will find few characters so truly estimable, none whose examples are more worthy your imitation. Had I remained silent on this subject, I make no doubt but your own discernment and good sense, would quickly have pointed out to you her superior claim to your attention; for there is such a natural sympathy between those of similar dispositions that they become insensibly attached, and contract for each other the sincerest friendship, before they perceive that they have made a step towards it. It is a maxim with the world, that an open ingenuous disposition

disposition subjects us to dangers. I grant that it sometimes renders us liable to imposition, but upon the whole produces far more happiness than a reserved distrustful one; there is a satisfaction in a mutual interchange of sentiments and good offices, of which a narrow soul can form no idea, and of which none but those who have felt the genial warmth of friendship can have the least conception. The only danger to which people subject themselves by an open unsuspicious temper is, that before they can have time to reflect on the ill consequences that may arise from it, they (from the natural communicativeness of their disposition) unbosom themselves as freely to a person with whom they have not been three days acquainted, as to one whose fidelity has been long approved. As this is a folly as peculiar to youth, as coldness and distrust to age, and long experience, I wish you, my dearest Ariane, to check every propension to volubility in the company of strangers; but in that of your particular friends, divest yourself

yourself of all restraint, it is there only you may indulge your natural cheerfulness and vivacity, without rendering yourself liable either to ridicule or censure. In recommending to you a necessary reserve in conversation, think not that it infers a total silence; there is a material difference between incessant talking and never opening the lips; the one subjects us to the imputation of stupidity, the other to indelicacy and unabashed assurance. There are many topics on which propriety forbids us to converse, or on which our education may not have furnished us with ideas sufficient to descant; on these occasions, it is far better to remain silent than expose our want of knowledge; but the pains which have been taken in your's will, I doubt not, prevent your being often condemned to taciturnity on that head. All therefore which it is necessary for me to guard you against, is too unlimited an indulgence of your social qualifications, as it may sometimes be attended with inconveniences which you little dream of. ~~A person~~ who
wishes

wishes to render themselves agreeable, should ever, in mixed assemblies, confine their conversation to general subjects, and particularly avoid the vice to which our sex are accused of being so naturally addicted. The world is of itself always ready enough to attribute to us want of candour in our opinions of each other, it should therefore be our study to prove that a woman may be as much superior to the meanness of detraction, as a sex who (from being exempt from all restrictions) have no temptation to it. Those who talk much, must either speak of themselves or others; the former is to the highest degree ill-bred, besides being a proof of insufferable vanity to suppose that a whole room full of company can be any ways interested in what particularly concerns ourselves; and the latter, unless extremely guarded in our expressions, is frequently a means of drawing on ourselves the stigma of ill nature, or (what is equally to be dreaded) the wish of rendering ourselves amiable by the exposure of our neighbour's

bour's foibles; this is a reason why every prudent woman will, when in public, keep a bridle upon her lips, and even in private restrain her vivacity within proper bounds. But all admonitions on this head will, I flatter myself, be unnecessary to one who has judgment sufficient to point out a proper medium; and who, I doubt not, from a proper distribution of her time, will contrive to render every hour of it productive either of satisfaction to herself or friends.

THE great art of happiness consists in being able to fill up, in an agreeable manner, the periods in which we must necessarily be alone; an art easily attained, if we neglect not the cultivation of those accomplishments every female of liberal education in some degree possesses: but many who are continually gadding about in search of amusement, forget that they have a fund within themselves which would afford them a greater share of satisfaction than they can ever experience in ceremonious visits; and making their pleasures entirely dependent upon others, leave themselves

without a resource for their solitary hours. It betrays a total inattention to domestic economy when the mistress of a family complains of *ennui*, (for the neglect of which no extent of fortune can possibly excuse her). I hope, my dear, when you take upon yourself the management of your father's, it will engage a large share both of your time and your attention, for it is the province of our sex to render ourselves as useful as amusive. Instead of which, if we may judge from general observation, the superficial part of education is attended to, while the useful is neglected. I hope, nay, am persuaded that your's has been conducted on a different plan, and that you are equally formed to excel in the domestic line of life, as in every elegant and feminine accomplishment. I shall add no more at present, than that if my advice or services should in any future period be essential to your happiness, I beg you will command them with as little ceremony as they are offered by your friend,

ALMEDA.

LET.

LETTER X.

TO AMYNTAS.

COULD our ancestors ascend from their hollow tombs, and behold the present degeneracy of mankind, they would exclaim with Doiley, “What a subversion of ideas!” There was a time, my friend, in which honour and honesty were synonymous terms, when integrity and valour were as necessary to make a man respectable, as modesty a woman; but thanks to the refinements of the age, these antiquated ideas are now no more. We consider our forefathers as a senseless race of mortals, adopting words with the signification of which they were entirely unacquainted; and to shew a thorough contempt of their opinions despise every one who happens to have preserved for them the most trifling veneration. Our children, instead of being educated in the principles

of religion, and the necessary duties of their station, are initiated into every species of Parisian luxury; the boys taught to cultivate the graces, and neglect the virtues; our girls to forget that when a female once ceases to blush, she has lost the most attractive charm of beauty.

It is now sufficient, that from our fortunes we command respect without deserving it: an honest man has as little chance of growing rich, as a worn-out foldier of promotion, or a lost good name of ever being regained; in a word, wealth serves as an apology for merit, and those who possess the largest share of it, have the greatest claim to the world's attention.

He who by fair dealing wishes only to acquire a comfortable livelihood, and to increase the profits of his trade would scorn to forfeit his veracity, or impose upon the ignorance of his customers, remains entirely unencouraged: while those who (to accumulate a fortune) practise every art of which their profession will admit, gain more by their volubility than
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the former by his integrity of heart. Those who are independent of the world, may be honest with impunity; but to those who wish to acquire a state of independence, honesty is (according to the improved opinion of mankind) a virtue as ineffectual as antique, one which may serve to make them ridiculed, but seldom to make them affluent or respectable. By a man of strict honour, we are not now to infer a person of equity and generous principles, but one who, though cowardice might withhold from drawing his sword in the defence of his country, to vindicate the reputation of a prostitute, or revenge an affront offered to his pride, would sheath it in the bosom of his dearest friend; one who maintains a mistress in all the luxuries of vice, while his family are sinking under the effects of his extravagance, who will suffer his creditors to become bankrupts without a sentiment of pity, yet to satisfy a debt contracted at the gaming-table, yields without reluctance his last remaining guinea. This is

modern honour, without which we appear as unfashionable among the *beau monde* as a birthday suit of the last year's pattern.

I was led into these reflections from a visit I yesterday made to an old friend at Brompton, who, among the news of the day, acquainted me, that the elegant villa and furniture of Sir Harry D. was selling off by auction, to discharge a debt of honour he had contracted while in Paris, for which act of generosity all the politer part of mankind were bestowing on him their warmest praise; while his more inelegant tradesmen were venting the sincerest curses for being refused their just demands, which this honourable proceeding persuaded them they might long in vain solicit.

So old fashioned are my sentiments that I could not help heartily sympathising with the latter, while in defiance to the refined notions of the former, I did not restrain myself from breathing an execration on a custom which authorises this unjust distinction, which deafens a man to every sense of honesty, while it renders him

attentive

attentive to the minutest punctilios of honour; prostituted word! alas, how little understood even by those who believe themselves to have the nicest sense of it!

THIS young Baronet whose conduct the world so much applaud, about five years since, by the death of his father, came to the possession of an estate of three thousand a-year, and in a few months afterwards married an amiable woman with a fortune equivalent to his own. As affection for each other, no less than interest, concurred to promote their union, they lived for some time in the strictest friendship, as worthy admiration for their mutual prudence as their conjugal fidelity; but how short-lived is sublunary felicity! Fashion, that sworn foe to matrimonial happiness, in a tower to Paris, usurped the throne of reason. Sir Harry saw himself laughed at for his domestic virtues; his lady for her unfashionable attachment to the man of her affections, which even the bonds of Hymen had not as yet had

power to weaken; and though both superior to the prejudices of custom, they were unequal to the shafts of ridicule. They became ashamed of a conduct which formed their greatest merit, and from a plan of economy which allowed them to be both just and generous, launched into the contrary extreme with a velocity that permitted them to be neither. The applauses of her acquaintance, though they helped to hush those regrets which would sometimes arise in the mind of Lady D. on a retrospection of those innocent pleasures she had sacrificed at the shrine of dissipation, could not reconcile her to the frequent absences of her husband. In compliance to modern absurdity, she willingly dispensed with his attendance at public places, but his neglect of home inflicted a pang for which his most unbounded indulgence could not compensate. She would sometimes venture to remonstrate; but once accustomed to the society of gamesters and women of no character, that of a wife became insipid;
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to her gentle chidings he would reply, that as he restrained her not in her own amusements, he expected not to be restrained in his. Thus, by the pursuit of separate pleasures, their fortunes, before more than equal to their necessary expenses, were in a short time totally insufficient to their superfluous ones; and as honour prompted first to the payment of the latter, the former were thought of only when the repeated dunnings of their tradesmen suffered them no longer to be forgotten.

IN the midst of this fashionable career, a new face strikes the Baronet, which from apparent marks of distress more particularly claims his attention; he finds the lady to be an officer's widow, who from her inability to support herself in the manner she could wish is willing to accept his patronage; and to establish his character as a man of gallantry, makes her a settlement to which his circumstances are far inadequate.

THIS puts the finishing stroke to their connubial happiness; her Ladyship, exasperated at such an open insult, demands a separate maintenance, which his extravagance has deprived him of the power of making; and sinking under the discovery, she retires into the country to spend the remainder of her days, without any other provision than a scanty jointure.

DESERTED by its mistress, their house, before the resort of the gay and great, becomes a rendezvous for sharpers, through the *finesse* of whom it quickly ceases to afford a refuge for its owner; driven to the usual resource of prodigality, Sir Harry, after yielding up his effects in Paris, returns to England, where, insensible to the clamours of a herd of creditors who followed him thither, he listens only to the voice of custom, and entering into the true spirit of modern honour, suffers them to depart without a shilling, while he sells his patrimonial estate to extricate himself from an embarrassment occasioned solely by an evening's dissipation.

THIS,

THIS, my worthy friend, is one of the many fatal examples the world daily affords us of the power of Fashion, to which more owe their ruin than to a natural propensity for intemperance and immorality. As from our superiors we derive the model of our external appearance, so is it in respect to our manners and opinions; for the present rage for every species of extravagance and folly, even among the lowest rank of people, is a convincing proof that we are no less governed by the latter than the former. How much then to be regretted, that those whose power is so extensive should give us patterns so unworthy of imitation! that they who might render virtue and honesty universal, should by a conduct so entirely opposite, laugh them out of countenance. From the general abuse of terms, we are led to imagine that those on whom the world bestow the epithet of honourable cannot be destitute of integrity: alas! how gross is the mistake; an honest man, and a man of honour,

nour, bear no more affinity to each other than beauty to deformity, or age to youth; and to find them both united in one, would (in polite life) be a phenomenon almost as extraordinary as the rays of Phœbus in the midnight hour.

RETIRED from the busy scenes of life, we contemplate at a distance on those follies and absurdities with which experience disgusts us, perhaps (as envy sometimes says) we depreciate because we have no longer spirits to enjoy them: whatever the cause, it is most evident that its pomps and vanities at twenty, appear to us in far more infatuating colours than at sixty-five. If rather too severe in my censures, attribute it to my long seclusion from the world; after having been so many years accustomed to the simple manners of the country, on my return to the metropolis mankind appeared to me just as I have represented them; such they still appear, nor would a longer abode with them reconcile me to their prejudices. I am now
preparing

preparing to revisit those tranquil scenes in which the tyrant Fashion never held her court, where Truth and Innocence join hand in hand; to find you there at my return, would prove a great addition to the felicity of

VERAMOND.

LETTER

L E T T E R X I.

TO DORINDA.

*On the Danger and Absurdity of Platonic
Friendship.*

SUCH a veneration as you profess for the memory of your aunt, I should hope, my dear Dorinda, that none of her lessons have been applied in vain: yet, from the apparent intimacy which subsists between yourself and the engaging Raymond, I am led to imagine that her most useful one has been long forgotten, if we credit the assertion of the poet, who affirms that

Friendship with women is sister to love.

Ought not the inference to hold good with respect to the other sex? but I fear it is a subject on which you have never allowed yourself leisure to reflect, or you must long since have discovered that the
continual

continual society of an amiable man, is of all others the most dangerous to a woman of sensibility. There are many men of worth, taste, and genius, particularly those whose dispositions happen to correspond with our own, with whom I own the wish of associating is both natural and laudable, as it is in the society of such only we can hope for improvement, and an expansion of our ideas; but as this similarity of mind often gives rise to a more tender attachment than mere friendship, it is a satisfaction in which we ought never to indulge ourselves with those fettered in the bands of Hymen.

MANY women of the best hearts and finest understandings have been ruined by men whom they at first thought of but as agreeable companions. In all the security of unsuspecting innocence, we suffer them to approach as under the specious name of friendship, accustom ourselves to their society, till it becomes necessary to our happiness. They perceive their influence, and though possessed of the strictest honour,
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the knowledge of it is generally productive of warmer sentiments; in fact, we find a lover where we wished only to meet a friend, and the discovery constrains us immediately to deprive ourselves of their converse, or our hearts become too far engaged to suffer us to escape with honour and reputation.

ALLOWING it should be possible to preserve the former amidst the continual temptations to which we are exposed from our own partiality, and the insinuating attentions of an amiable object, is it probable the latter should remain unfulfilled? The world, in its censures on our sex, never gives itself the trouble of considering that a woman may be virtuous in spite of every incitement to the contrary, it is sufficient that appearances shew her not so to justify the assertion, and however the consciousness of innocence may support us under the calumny, it would argue want of sensibility rather than philosophy to console ourselves under such injurious reflections. To preserve us from
the

the mortification, we should therefore guard ourselves against any degree of intimacy with those who (though their personal and mental qualifications might recommend them to the first place in our esteem) are, from their matrimonial engagements, precluded from receiving any particular proofs of it. A friendship with such, though regulated by the strictest rules of Platonism, must necessarily subject us to the imputation of indiscretion, even from those who have the greatest reliance on our virtue: what prudent woman would then risk such an inestimable jewel as her reputation, in the hands of a world in which either candour or impartiality but seldom find a place?

THE most delicate and guarded of our sex, cannot say to her affections “Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.” Indeed those who believe themselves most impregnable to the shafts of love, are more frequently the victims of their own security than those who appear not to despise its power; for, relying on the strength

strength of a discretion which has never been essayed, they brave the united temptations ever attendant on an intercourse between agreeable objects of different sexes, with as firm a reliance upon their indifference, as if they believed that the power over our inclinations is really vested in ourselves alone.

Of this number I fear is my Dorinda: without considering the dangers to which you subject yourself by indulging a friendship for the husband of the fallen ill-fated Almeria, you are, I doubt, making rapid progress in an attachment which will go nigh to empoison your felicity, and raise an invincible barrier to your future happiness. Was Raymond far less seducing than he is, both in person and in manners, it would even then be blameable to encourage attentions which, under the sanction of esteem, betray the tenderness of love. The satisfaction you discover in his society, in preference to every other, evidently displays a partiality you dream not of yourself, and without the most distant
view

view of encouragement, you are aiding him to nourish a sentiment it is your duty to suppress. A short time longer might deprive you of the power: attend then, my friend, to the admonitions of your Amasina.

Dare not the infectious sigh; the pleading look,
Downcast and low, in meek submission drest,
But full of guile; let not the fervent tongue,
Prompt to deceive with adulation smooth,
Gain on your purposed will; remember, 'tis too late
When on your heart the torrent softness pours,
Then wisdom prostrate lies, and fading fame
Dissolves in air away.

Platonic ideas but ill agree with youth and beauty. Was any one to tell us that in the month of June the streams were bound in ice, should we credit the assertion? yet would it be more extraordinary than that a young lady of the nicest sensibility should remain unfusceptible of charms, powerful as those of the object with whom you every day converse.

WAS

WAS it even possible (you see, my dear, I am myself rather credulous on the subject) that at eighteen you should preserve the *retenue* of fifty, do you look upon the security of your own heart as a guarantee for his, or think that the world will accept of the apology? believe me, you deceive yourself; as every fruit is the product of its peculiar soil, so are the passions of their peculiar seasons; friendship in youth is but a purer name for love; one under which we suffer its approaches without shielding ourselves against the infatuation, we refuse not to listen to the insinuating language of the former, till the latter has insensibly crept into our hearts, and grant the friend what we would deny the lover. It is a specious mask, under which the sex address us with impunity, which they remove with caution, and which once withdrawn, we are frequently left without the resolution to wish them to resume. An open, confident, presuming lover, who disguises not his passion, but urges a return, is an enemy far less to be dreaded, than a respectful

spectful submissive friend who slyly insinuates himself into our good graces, and by gaining our affections without soliciting them, permits us not the liberty of rejection. Such ever is the conduct of professional Platonists ; I say professional, my dear, because I in reality doubt the existence of such characters in the male sex, whatever there may be among our own ; and even allowing a possibility of their existence, it is not among the young and lovely that we must look for them.

THE satisfactions attendant on your friendship with the agreeable Raymond blind you to its dangers ; but if it is not yet arrived, there will assuredly come a time in which you will wish never to have known him. The pleasures of Platonism, on which you so romantically expatiate, will not indemnify you for the sacrifice you make to them ; for however inessential to our felicity we look upon the good opinion of the world, it is when forfeited that we, too late, perceive its estimation. Precluded from a possibility of honourably

ably indulging your affections, either your virtue or your happiness must at length become the sacrifice. While yet within your power, aim then to preserve them both : you have among your admirers many worthy characters who sigh in vain for those distinctions bestowed on one whose faith ought to remain inviolable to his first engagements. Detach yourself from his society, in order to become sensible of the merit to which it blinds you, and by choosing a protector, shield yourself from his infatuations. Pardon, my Dorinda, the freedom of this advice ; sincere friendship is not to be limited by the bounds of ceremony : to see you happy is my most earnest wish, and for the accomplishment of it I depend in a great measure on that prudence which was ever unimpeachable, till the period in which chance introduced you to one who has a sufficient share of attractions to license censure, and who cultivates your esteem but to render you contemptible. Had either of you less claim to admiration from your personal and
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mental endowments, probably you might escape uncalumniated; but in a world so governed by appearances, deformity only could secure you from aspersions. I hope I have said enough to convince you of the necessity of adopting a different mode of thinking, and am, with all that friendship I ever professed,

your most devoted

AMASINA.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

On Reading Rousseau's Eloisa.

THANK you, dear Dorinda, for the favour you have done me in the perusal of your favourite author, I wish, in deference to your opinion, I could say of mine also; but though I found much entertainment in his *Eloisa*, I must acknowledge her the most dangerous character which an inexperienced heart can possibly be acquainted with. Was I a mother, I would as soon intrust my children with arsenic, unaccompanied with restrictions in the use of it, as I would with volumes so calculated to inflame the imagination, and mislead the judgment; in which vice is delineated in such insinuating colours, that a mind unfortified with the strongest beams of reason, must consequently

consequently fall a victim to its delusive tenets. The moral tendency of most authors is to inspire virtue, and excite an abhorrence of criminal pleasures; it was probably the intention of Rousseau: but in the former part of his work, where he paints his Eloisa so lovely, even in the lap of vice, does he consider that first impressions are generally the most durable; and that even the perusal of her admirable conduct in her married state is insufficient to destroy those destructive ideas excited by the indiscretions of her youth? on the contrary, it rather helps to strengthen them; for many attributing to themselves equal perfection as his heroine, become faithful copists of the former part of her conduct, and till fatal experience unfolds the horrid truth, discern not that a transition from vice to virtue, is far less easy than the quick descent from virtue unto vice.

In justice to Rousseau, I will acknowledge that there are many writers more immoral and obscene, but few so dangerous to female readers. His story simply

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told,

told, would neither interest the heart, or dwell upon the memory ; but heightened with the brightest colourings of a luxurious imagination, and rendered still more seducing from the tender pathos of the style, none can read it uninterested or unmoved.

IN Eloisa we behold a beautiful young woman, whose mind has been early inculcated in the love of virtue, and who is skilled in every accomplishment that can adorn and dignify her sex. The portrait is so flatteringly drawn, that we admire long ere we discover, that though in theory a philosopher, she is at heart a very woman ; and though we behold her sinking imperceptibly into vice, are, from the enthusiasm of imagination, compelled to adore her as an angel.

THE sensible, spirited, yet virtuous Clara, is depicted in colours no less flattering than her cousin : to give us a true idea of female friendship, she helps to promote a correspondence the fatal consequences of which she might easily have foreseen,

foreseen, and rather than incur the displeasure of two infatuated lovers, who would afterwards have blest her for her prudence, suffers them to sink into an error, from which all her pity never can recall them. She even endeavours to reconcile Eloisa to her fallen state, and till the fear of a discovery shews an absolute necessity for them to part, aids them in the continuance of a guilt which ends not until suspected by their acquaintance, and terminates in the existence of the best of mothers.

Is this a conduct such a tender friendship ought to have dictated? mistake me not, Dorinda, I mean not to infer that Mrs. Orbe should have adopted the modern sentiments of mankind, and deserted her friend, because unfortunately less worthy her esteem; but ought not she, whose reason was unclouded by the mists of passion, to have endeavoured to display to her the fatal consequences of an intercourse every day more criminal from unrestrained indulgence; the best heart may, by an unhappy attachment, be betrayed

into unpremeditated error; but depravity only can prompt the repetition of it. What merit can we attribute to Eloisa in consenting to the exile of her lover, when she could no longer detain him with her without the hazard of his life, and her own reputation, which for the honour of her family it was doubly necessary she should endeavour to preserve? indeed, seriously considered, her whole conduct throughout the first two volumes, is rather deserving our censure and contempt, than that pity and esteem which every tender heart involuntarily bestows.

With all that sensibility of soul our author so charmingly describes, would it not have been more natural for her to have considered the general consequences of too successful love, than by the steps she pursued to force the consent of her father, have risked the losing of St. Preux's esteem? was it consistent with the delicacy of her disposition to build her hopes of happiness on a circumstance that must entirely ruin her in the good
opinion

opinion of the world? No: educated by the hand of care, and versed in all the necessary duties of her sex, she could not be insensible that a woman who, by yielding too implicitly to the dictates of a misplaced affection, forfeits all pretensions to public admiration, can never expect to retain that of her lover. After so great a sacrifice as that of virtue, in a soul so apparently sensible of its degradation as was Eloisa's, who can peruse without astonishment her sudden determination of accepting the hand of Mr. Wolmar? To speak in the common phrase, she made a virtue of necessity, and after losing all hopes of being happy in her first attachment, took unto herself a husband as a voluntary penance for her former folly, and became (as we are afterwards told) as great a pattern of piety and self-denial, as she had been before of indiscretion and disobedience.

My sentiments may perhaps be different from those of most people, but I really cannot think any part of her con-

duct more censurable than this. Had she remained single, it would, in my opinion, have been far more worthy admiration; for there are certain ideas of delicacy, which will not reconcile us to the reflection of having rewarded a virtuous and honourable affection with a divided heart, one too, the sensibility of which has been quite exhausted from its first impression.

THE character of Mr. Wolmar is no less inconsistent than those of Mrs. Orbe and Eloisa; at an age in which discretion generally triumphs over sensibility of heart, (without reflecting on the disparity of their years and disposition) he ventures to unite himself to a woman whose person and affections he is conscious has long been the property of another; and though an unbeliever in matters which relate to a future state, is perfectly prepossessed that the innate virtues of her heart will overcome her former weakness; probably honour was his reliance; but would it not have been much more natural for a man of his gravity and experience, to have considered

considered that a woman who had not resolution sufficient to defend her own, was of all others the most improper guardian for the defence of his? on what foundation could he form his hopes of her conversion? he believed not in futurity, and consequently must be quite insensible that religion only is a successful combatant against the passions.

We will allow that he might be generous enough to believe that a woman of Eloisa's turn of mind would never sacrifice her hopes of being one day happy with the object of her affection, if she had not previously formed a determinate resolution of conducting herself with honour to the man who, in obedience to the command of a parent, she had consented to accept; but supposing these to have really been the sentiments of Mr. Wolmar, his conduct after their marriage is still more inconsistent than that which preceded it. Did he act as a man of prudence in exposing her afterwards to the temptation of St. Preux's society? how-

ever virtuous might be her resolves, he must be sensible that a heart torn by jarring conflicts (such as must naturally attend a situation so interesting on both sides), was sufficient to destroy the tranquillity of her mind. But he was a philosopher, and as such generally prefer experimental knowledge to the suggestions of reason and probability, it is not so extraordinary he should adopt a mode of conduct few would have dared to venture on, and fewer still have adopted with success. The man who exposes his honour to such unnecessary temptation, is, in my opinion, entirely undeserving pity, should the experiment be attended with the loss of it; for so far from esteeming it a proof of generosity and reliance on the virtue of his wife, I look upon it as laying a snare for the innocence it is his duty to protect.

You will, perhaps, think me too severe in my criticism, but if you look into it impartially, I am sure, my Dorinda, you will own with me, that Eloisa, though a
work

work we cannot peruse unentertained, is one which upon the whole abounds with a larger share of inconsistencies and absurdities, than almost any we meet with either in our own language or that of other nations, and one in which the author has so artfully blended vice with virtue, that we are often in danger of mistaking the former for the latter, an error so fatal to minds incapable of making a just distinction, that it were better never to have acquired a taste for literary amusement, than imbibe a poison which even the powers of reason are sometimes insufficient to expel.

It will be unnecessary to make an apology for the candour with which I have delivered my sentiments, for I am convinced you are too much the friend of truth, to wish it should give place to complaisance and insincerity. The productions of Monsieur Rousseau, have so many years established him a favourite among our sex, that it rests not in the power of an individual to influence the general opinion;

I flatter myself, therefore, with being exculpated from the charge of endeavouring to deprive him of the admiration to which some of his works have so justly entitled him; but must be sincere enough to add, that I think his *Eloisa* should be read only by the other sex, or such of ours as have entered the state in which she appears so truly amiable.

THE post is just going out, and prevents me from saying more, than that I am, my dear Dorinda,

most sincerely yours,

ANASINA.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

ARCADIUS TO HIS SISTER.

YOU ask me, dearest Selima, what are the most indubitable signs of a sincere affection? a question which leads to another you will not perhaps answer me with equal candour. Your heart, hitherto invulnerable, at length finds itself a captive, and not daring to confide in its own observations, wishes to be informed whether the attachment is reciprocal; Is it not so? Assure yourself, in affairs of this kind, a brother is no improper confident; but before I solicit that distinction, I will endeavour to display to you some unerring rules by which your sex may judge of the sincerity of ours, and discover whether they are the objects of a real or a feigned affection; for pardon me if I aver, that from the illusions of vanity, you frequently become dupes to the latter, while the former

mer affords you only a source for ridicule and contempt.

TRUE love consists not in sentences studied to please its object, but in actions which may merit her esteem; and instead of abounding in compliments and professions, is most eloquent when silent. A man infected with this passion seldom affects pleasantry in the company of his mistress; it deprives him of his spirits, and his vanity, and though cheerful in his deportment to other people, renders him timid, serious, and even dull in her society; he hopes every thing, yet his passion so greatly magnifies her perfections, that doubt of success corrodes his happiness, and while wishing to render himself beloved, forfeits all pretensions to her distinction from the awkwardness of his behaviour. These are the most striking symptoms of a sincere affection; those of a feigned one may be discovered by a conduct in every respect entirely the reverse, and which, though more flattering to the pride, is far less satisfactory than a diffidence which arises
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from love alone: an unembarrassed manner, and an attention to all the *minutiae* of *politesse*, are proofs only of a heart at ease, one which can enumerate your perfections, and extol your charms without being affected by their influence. Timidity is so inseparable from love, that when you hear a man delivering his encomiums with all the elegance of an oration, assure yourself it is more with a view of displaying his own eloquence, than doing justice to your merit. A sensible woman will rather feel herself hurt by the unmeaning compliments of a coxcomb, than pleased with his attentions: and however beautiful in person, esteem every encomium on that head as an indignity offered to her delicacy and judgment. We should look upon the person as very ill-bred, who was continually teasing us with the repetition of a tale with which we were before acquainted: it is equally so to tell a lady she is lovely, whose glass must have signified as much a thousand times before; it is sufficient that by the respectfulness
of

of our conduct, we testify her power, without descending to the meanness of flattery. But be a woman charming as nature can have formed her, there are some of our sex so addicted to its arts, that they would endeavour to persuade her she was immortal, rather than be thought deficient in complaisance.

THIS, though highly blameable in us, is in a great measure owing to vanity in yourselves, for many women are not contented with the preference of a man of sense, unless idolized as angels, nor believe themselves beloved without the most ridiculous and extravagant sacrifices on the part of their lovers. I hope it will be needless to point out to my Selima the folly of indulging such caprice, as she cannot be insensible that an amiable man who (without any interested views upon her fortune) prefers her to every other female, gives her sufficient proofs of his affection, without descending to the servile flattery of a *petit maitre*, and that to be treated by the former with the respect due

to virtue, is a distinction far more enviable than the gross idolatry of the latter.

THERE are many situations in which I allow that it is almost impossible to judge of the sincerity of our sex, for even ourselves are as apt to mistake a transitory liking for a permanent attachment, and ere we discover our mistake, inthral ourselves in an engagement from which death only can disentangle us; this is a reason why no woman of prudence will be in haste to discover her partiality. It is a mistaken notion, that length of acquaintance exhausts the affection before marriage, for I will venture to affirm, that it is frequently a means of rivetting it more firmly: by entering too hastily into bonds indissoluble, you deprive yourselves of an opportunity of learning the disposition of your lover, a discovery essentially necessary to your happiness; for however agreeable in person, unless a similarity of taste in some degree prevails between you, it is impossible for domestic harmony to subsist.

last longer than while the novelty of the state recommends you to each other.

IN the earliest dawn of your acquaintance with a gentleman whose conduct betrays any symptoms of affection, you should examine well your temper, taste and sentiments: if your heart tells you he possesses not the requisites most essential to your felicity, beware of giving him the most trifling encouragement; a woman of sense may preserve a dignity sufficient to check the advances of a lover she disapproves, without wounding his sensibility, or deviating from her natural gentleness of temper

It is a general maxim with your sex, that impatience to become your husband is the strongest proof of our attachment and sincerity; but in that, my Selima, trust me, you sometimes err; misled by this delusion, I have known many amiable girls yield themselves to wretchedness; for thousands who entertain the most despicable opinion of the marriage state, are led

led into it merely from finding the object of a temporary passion in a sphere which leaves no hopes of gaining her on less honourable terms, and sometimes it arises even from motives still less generous; distrust, however incompatible with friendship, is necessary in love; the stronger your attachment, with the greater caution ought you to conceal it, till assured that the object is deserving your esteem. If addressed by one known to any of your acquaintance, it will be easy to discover his character, circumstances and connections, without seeming interested in the inquiry; and by the information you gain concerning them, may you regulate your conduct. But if it is a stranger who solicits your alliance, never venture to betray your sentiments till time shall have confirmed you he is worthy that distinction. It is impossible to lay down to your sex any direct rule of conduct in attachments of the heart, as it in a great measure depends on their particular situations, which may render blameable in some, what would

would be commendable in others, but there are some infallible ones by which you may at all times judge of the affection of a lover.

BE assured if it is sincere, and he is conscious of meriting your favour, he will never desire his attachment to be kept secret; nor for any personal gratification persuade you to a clandestine correspondence, which, however innocent in itself, may endanger your reputation. I do not say but even the most honourable among our sex, sometimes make a proposition of this kind merely to discover the dispositions of yours, but a compliance inevitably destroys our good opinion, as art, though it may be agreeable in a mistress, is a qualification ever unwished for in a wife; if such a proposal is rejected with becoming dignity, the repetition of it is a convincing proof that you are addressed by one who has a design either upon your virtue or your fortune, in which ever case, prudence will best point out to you the contempt he merits. Never let an ostentatious display

of

of grandeur deter you from searching into the real circumstances of a lover; for as there are no arts to which some men will not descend to gain the possession of a favourite object, it is impossible with any degree of certainty to form your judgment of his fortune by external appearance only; if it proves such as will not bear inquiry, and he afterwards urges you to accept his hand, shun him as a deceiver, for assure yourself that true affection seeks only the happiness of its object abstracted from every selfish consideration; and though it sighs for a return, will sooner consume in hopeless flames, than involve her in its difficulties. The province of an honourable lover is to merit, not seduce, the favour of his mistress, and if his situation, though it recommends him to her esteem, entitles him not to her hand, he will (animated by her idea) endeavour either by diligent perseverance to improve his fortune; or by discreetly shunning her society, save her the mortification of beholding a man she pities, but for whom
 to
 prudence

prudence forbids her to cherish a warmer sentiment.

TIME permits me not to add more upon the subject; but much less, I flatter myself, would have sufficed to one whose goodness of heart and exemplary prudence endears her to all her friends, and to none more than

her affectionate Brother,

ARCADIUS.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

FELICA TO ROSELLA.

Excusing herself from having declined her Invitation, and acquainting her of a Morning Ramble in which she had acquired the Art of true Benevolence.

MY dear Rosella, will, I am persuaded, excuse me from declining her friendly invitation, when acquainted that it was occasioned by a prior engagement to spend the holidays at Elm Hall, an estate lately purchased by my brother, to which, as he affectionately assured me it was intended as a little retreat for me after his marriage with Lady Ashby, I could not refuse attending him without the most striking proof of insensibility and ingratitude; his kindness to me since the death of a parent who, without consideration to my happiness, left me entirely dependent on his generosity,

fity,

fity, entitles him to my sincerest friendship, as it leaves me no room to regret a circumstance many brothers would have turned to their own advantage, and have left me to seek redress in unavailing tears.

THE other day, after mentioning to me his determination of marrying, “Think not,” says he, “my dear Felica, that my
“alliance with Lady Ashby shall deprive
“you of a brother; in me you will always
“experience the most steady friend; though
“by the ill-placed partiality of my father,
“you were left without any provision but
“what I am pleased to make you, assure
“yourself it shall never be a disadvantage
“to you in point of fortune: I consider
“you as justly entitled to a sister’s share as
“if the sum had been particularly specified in his last bequest; and to convince
“you further of my esteem, from this
“moment I abjure my power; my advice you may at all times command,
“but your own discretion will be to you
“a sufficient guardian. After my marriage with her Ladyship, my house may
“not

“not perhaps prove to you so agreeable
 “a situation as when you were the sole
 “mistress of it; to remedy which incon-
 “venience I purchased this, and beg you
 “will henceforth look upon it as your
 “own, one which you may retire to, or
 “retreat from, in proportion as mine con-
 “tinues to be agreeable. Here are also
 “some writings, by which you may at
 “pleasure command a sum that will en-
 “title you to an alliance worthy of your
 “merit; your own prudence will, I trust,
 “preclude you from contracting one un-
 “worthy of your birth.”

How noble! how disinterested was
 this conduct! would every one be thus
 guided by the rules of equity, the abuse
 of power would be less generally com-
 plained of. With all the composure I
 could assume, I thanked the good young
 man for this tender proof of his fraternal
 love, but the bursting tide of gratitude
 rendered my words entirely inexpressive
 of its extent, which can alone be shewn in
 conducting

conducting myself so as to merit his excess of kindness.

My taste for rural neatness could not have been more completely gratified than by the possession of this little dwelling, the simple beauties of which have for me superior charms to the most noble structure. Had I by the kindness of my father been left mistress of my fate, it is of all others exactly the situation I should have chosen; but could I then have been more happy than in the friendship of a brother, who even studies to prevent my wishes? may the happiness of one who has been so assiduous to establish mine, be extensive as his goodness, permanent as will be my gratitude and affection. I am sure, my friend, you will unite your wishes with those of your Felica. Edmond was ever one of your greatest favourites, and, independent of a sister's partiality, I may venture to affirm that there is none more truly deserving that distinction. I am anxious for your opinion of a situation
with

with which I am so much infatuated, nor shall feel my happiness above half complete till you participate it with me; it is now above a fortnight since we have been here, which time has been chiefly employed in establishing my little household, and in rambling through the delightful walks which environ the village. I find there are many respectable families in the neighbourhood, some few of whom my brother is acquainted with, and wishes me to visit; but at present I have made no progress towards an intimacy with any more than one of them, though the opportunities have been frequent; this I believe is partly owing to a constitutional reserve, and in some measure to the novelty of the surrounding scenes which afford me such a variety of pleasures, that I find it quite unnecessary to request the aid of social ones; besides my abode here will this time be so short, that I think it better to defer a return of visits till the next time I come down, which will probably be at a season that by depriving my favourite groves of all

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their vernal beauties, will render me more domestic, and my company more valuable to those who seek it; for in my present romantic humour, every species of diversion is insipid but what is to be found among the sylvan shades.

WHEN nature's music all is hushed, when the birds cease to warble their woodland notes, and, bound in icy chains, the streams no longer lull me to serenity, then to hold a dissertation on fashions and painted papers may not be disagreeable; but while Phœbus sheds its brightest beams, and Flora, decked in all her splendour, invites me to the meads, is it possible to dissipate the hours at cards? no, my Rosella; sooner let me acquire the title of a female anchorite, than waste the precious days of spring in pleasures adapted only to the winter months.

ALAS! my friend, how inferior are the joys of dissipation to those of a life devoted to the noblest of human pleasures, that of patronizing genius and relieving the distressed; I experienced yesterday a satisfaction in one of my early rambles which a
dozen

dozen years spent in the gaieties of the *beau monde* never could have been productive of. Without considering the ill effects of indiscriminate liberality, I very seldom behold a person apparently groaning under penury, but the sight of them is instantaneously succeeded by an application to my pocket, and with these charitable propensions it is not frequently that I find myself without an object on whom to exercise them: the inconvenience of such misplaced benevolence I have often discovered, from being followed by a sufficient number of supplicants to have formed the retinue of a prince; yet so habituated am I to relieve them, that charity generally triumphs over prudence. While strolling through a little wood which environs my cottage, I could not help observing to my brother, that though so large a portion of my time was passed in walking, I had never since my arrival beheld a person soliciting an alms, nor indeed one whose appearance bespoke the wants of it.

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dozen

“It is a remark I expected to have
 “heard sooner,” replied my brother, “and
 “one, my dear, I wish we had an oppor-
 “tunity of making in every part of Eng-
 “land; do you not discover the reason
 “of it?”

“INDEED I do not, unless it is that the
 “soil is more fertile, or the inhabitants
 “more industrious than the generality of
 “mankind.”

“IN part both, but it is principally
 “owing to the discretion of their patron,
 “who never suffers a mendicant to be seen
 “about the village.”

“And by what means does he avoid it?
 “there are few, however immense their for-
 “tune, whose power is sufficiently exten-
 “sive to drive out poverty from their
 “neighbourhood.”

“But what power will not effect, bene-
 “volence sometimes is equal to; it is by
 “kindness, not by severity that Benignus
 “governs; those who apply to him for
 “money, are supplied with work, and
 “afterwards with the reward of labour;

“he

“ he considers all who have the blessing of
 “ health, as capable of doing something
 “ towards procuring themselves a liveli-
 “ hood; and suffers none to lurk about
 “ the village, who prefer the bread of in-
 “ dolence to that of honest industry; he
 “ looks upon the relief of such as an en-
 “ couragement to vice, and affirms it to
 “ to be entirely owing to the mismanage-
 “ ment of charity that our streets are so
 “ greatly infested with objects of distress;
 “ conscious that these are his sentiments,
 “ none solicit his assistance but what know
 “ themselves deserving of it; yet with
 “ an estate of only six thousand a-year,
 “ he does more real good than hundreds
 “ who possess a fortune four times as im-
 “ mense. Many who are unacquainted
 “ with his character suppose him austere,
 “ morose and parsimonious; and, indeed,
 “ from the style in which he lives, added
 “ to the external gravity of his appear-
 “ ance, it is a suggestion any stranger
 “ might form, without an impeachment
 “ of their judgment; but to those who

“are more intimate with him, he appears
 “as he is, the most social and most gene-
 “rous of men. There are many in the
 “world whose benevolence may equal
 “that of Benignius, but there are few
 “who understand so well the art of pru-
 “dently dispensing it; it is his study to
 “render every one happy in the sphere
 “to which they were ordained by Provi-
 “dence; to place them above it, he observes
 “would be increasing the number of their
 “wants, rather than relieving them, and
 “that excess of munificence to some,
 “puts it out of our power to be even
 “charitable to others. He takes care to
 “inform himself particularly of the cha-
 “racters and circumstances of all who
 “live around him, and those who by
 “their industry shew themselves worthy
 “of his patronage; he supplies with mo-
 “ney to carry on their several avocations,
 “which they repay him without interest
 “as their trade increases. If among the
 “youth of either sex he discovers a pe-
 “culiar bent of genius towards any of the
 “sciences,

“ sciences, he generously takes upon him-
 “ self the expence of their improvement;
 “ and when arrived at a proper degree of
 “ perfection, places them in a situation in
 “ which they may display their abilities
 “ with the advantage they deserve. The
 “ pleasure of seeing them excel in their
 “ professions is the only reward he wishes,
 “ and of which, from his extreme discern-
 “ ment, he is seldom disappointed.

“ With these extensive propensions of
 “ generosity towards his fellow creatures,
 “ would you believe that I have more
 “ than once heard him accused of un-
 “ charitableness? the cause of this is ob-
 “ vious, he makes the nicest distinction
 “ between necessities brought upon man-
 “ kind by their own misconduct, and
 “ those which have been the effect of ill
 “ health, loss of friends, or other una-
 “ voidable misfortunes; the delicacy
 “ with which he dispenses his liberality
 “ to the latter, forms the most estimable
 “ part of his character, but though they
 “ are the principal objects of his attention,

“it is doing him the highest injustice to
 “affirm, that the former are entirely ex-
 “cluded from his benevolence; for even
 “to those he sometimes largely contri-
 “butes both his assistance and advice.”

“WHAT an amiable portrait have you
 “drawn,” replied I, “it is so far su-
 “perior to any one I have hitherto found
 “among my acquaintance, that I shall
 “be impatient till Benignius is added to
 “the number. But, my dear brother, you
 “tell me not whether this prodigy of
 “your sex is yet in the bloom of youth,
 “or arrived at an age in which I may
 “with safety aim at the possession of his
 “friendship, without endangering my
 “heart.”

“OF that you shall judge yourself,
 “Felica; we are now within a quarter of
 “a mile of his cottage: though it is
 “some years since I have seen him, I
 “doubt not but he will honour me with
 “a place in his remembrance; we will,
 “if agreeable to you, lengthen our walk,
 “and pay him a visit *en passant*.”

THE

THE proposal charmed me; I forgot that I was before sufficiently tired, and tripping on with renewed alacrity, very soon found myself within a prospect of the house, which from the simplicity of its structure, I should have taken for the abode of one of his most humble tenants. On entering a little gate which led us through a long avenue of towering elms, we beheld a number of labourers, some employed in rolling the verdant turf, others in pruning the tender vines, which twining around the trunks of the embowering trees, extend themselves in gay festoons, and while they afford a shelter from the mid-day sun, diffuse around them the most fragrant sweets. On one side of the walk, I observed a small inclosure, which my brother informed me was cultivated with the nicest care, and appropriated entirely to the purposes of raising aromatic and medicinal herbs, from the extensive virtues of which it had gained in the neighbourhood the general title of the *Æsculapian Parterre*. On the other side of

the avenue, I beheld a piece of ground nearly of the same size, but railed off with less precision; this I found was sowed with all the various kinds of seeds on which the winged choristers delight to feed, and in the center of it was erected a little granary to which, in the inclement seasons, they have unrestrained access; the harmonious notes which thrilled upon our ears as we leisurely proceeded upon the walk, convinced me this indulgence was well repaid by its becoming their chosen asylum; in idea I could not help congratulating their patron on this happy mode of attracting their attentions, and wondered that any one should impose upon the feathered tribe the restrictions of a narrow cage, when by more gentle treatment they might thus easily compel them to willing bondage. As if acquainted with the subject of my reflections, “What a lesson for mankind, my dear Felica!” said my brother, “the innumerable quantity of birds which hover round this wilderness of sweets, is a convincing
 “ proof

“proof that gratitude will compel us to
 “what all the compulsion in the world
 “could not possibly effect; let the rigid
 “parent learn from hence that a rage for
 “pleasure in their children is only to be
 “subdued by reasonable indulgence; and
 “the fair one, who wishes to insure the
 “affection of her husband or her lover,
 “that a superiority of beauty is a less
 “powerful barrier against inconstancy,
 “than a sweetness of temper and a soft
 “complacency, which though it exempts
 “us not always entirely from the wish of
 “roving, makes an impression upon the
 “heart, which quickly disgusts us with
 “inferior charms.”

At that instant we discovered the hos-
 pitable owner of the cottage, who ap-
 peared to me to be about five-and-thirty,
 seated under a spreading beech; he had
 laid down a book on which he was musing,
 to give some necessary instructions to his
 labourers, and was just returning again to
 his studies when our sudden appearance
 drew him from the bench; and advancing

to

to salute us with that benignity with which he ever welcomes strangers, he recollected the features of my brother.

THEIR expressions of satisfaction at this unexpected meeting was on both sides animated and polite, such only as could have been excited by an interval of absence long as theirs had been; for I found that an acquaintance which began at the university, had been discontinued since the time that Benignius left it, which was some time before my brother. After introducing me as a sister valuable to his heart, Edmond acquainted him in general terms of every thing particular which had occurred since that period, and of the purchase he had lately made in the neighbourhood, to which circumstance he said we owed our present happiness; as it was not till after we came down that he learnt his old friend had retired to that part of the world, though he remembered some years since to have heard him mention an estate in Hertfordshire. By this time we had partaken of his seat, and were expressing
our

our highest approbation of his taste in gardening and agriculture (which displayed itself in each surrounding scene), when a boy and girl, lovely as cherubims came, hand in hand, to tell their papa that breakfast waited for him in the summer-house; and not the least intimidated at the sight of us, with all the freedom they would have used to those with whom they had been long acquainted, asked if we would not also favour their mama with our company: an invitation from such sweet innocents, was too irresistible to be declined. I left Benignus and Edmond to proceed as slowly as they pleased, and giving to each of the children an hand, tripped gaily towards the house, suffering them to conduct me where their inclinations prompted. In passing the door, the little boy ran in, bid a servant carry some more china into the garden, and then rejoined us: the thoughtfulness of the child delighted me; in the height of my pleasurable sensations, I was stooping down to embrace him, when his sister observing

observing her mama at the window of the summer-house, "See, Madam," said she, "I have brought you a visitor, we found this lady and a gentleman talking with papa, and they are so obliging as to accept a breakfast with us."

In a moment the good lady was on the steps, and with that complacency and ease, which distinguishes that happy family from all I ever knew, welcomed me with as much sincerity as her children had done before, though as perfectly a stranger to my character, as to my person; but it was sufficient that we were apparently acquaintances of her husband, there needed no other recommendation to one whose only satisfaction is in contributing to his. While busied in arranging the china, which had been put out of order from the late addition sent by the commands of her son, I had an opportunity of glancing my eyes over a figure formed at once to attract admiration and create respect; though evidently on the youthful side of thirty, her matron-like appearance shewed a perfect
inattention

inattention to the external gaieties which usually mark that age; her dark brown hair, instead of being drest conformable to the present fashion, was loosely turned up under a new French nightcap, over which she wore a black laced bonnet, and her gown which was only of a small sprigged linen, neither trained behind her with a prodigious waste of cloth, nor were her petticoats so short as to shew a thorough contempt of decency; in a word, she appeared as every prudent woman ought to do, superior to the prejudices of fashionable absurdity, yet, without any of those superfluities we unthinking mortals are apt to misname the advantages of dress, was in the eyes of your Felicia lovely to an extreme. I know not whether our sentiments of each other were reciprocal, but it is most certain that we found ourselves as easy and unconstrained as if we had been seven years acquainted. Benignius during breakfast amused us with a comparative view of the superior happiness of a country life, when held in competition
with

with one of noise and bustle, in which we
 have neither leisure to reflect on the duties
 required of us, or to practise those we
 know. “We sometimes,” says he “make
 “an excursion to the metropolis, merely
 “for the satisfaction of owning that the
 “felicity we taste in this retreat is doubly
 “enhanced on our return. In any situation
 “we might ourselves be happy, but in
 “one of retirement we are peculiarly so,
 “because it permits us to extend our
 “happiness to others. Neither Eliza or
 “myself pique ourselves so much on our
 “philosophy as to despise the innocent
 “amusements of life; but we look upon
 “the money we might expend in them by
 “a constant residence in town, as far
 “better employed in the purposes of be-
 “nevolence. Our estate, though not large,
 “is more than sufficient to our wants, be-
 “cause in consideration to those of our
 “neighbours, we have learnt to confine
 “them within reasonable bounds; we taste
 “in moderation all the various gifts of
 “Providence in the seasons in which it was
 “designed

“designed we should enjoy them; but at-
 “tempt not by abundant labour and ex-
 “pence to force nature out of her proper
 “channel. Those children of refinement
 “who have too much delicacy to be
 “pleased with any of its luxuries unless
 “unseasonable, forget that our flowers
 “diffuse a finer fragrance, our fruits a
 “richer flavour when ripened by the en-
 “livening sun, than those produced by ar-
 “tificial heat; yet to a discerning taste, the
 “preference of the latter is as easily to be
 “discovered, as that of roasted viands to
 “those dried in ovens.

“WHEN we mix with the world, we
 “in some degree conduct ourselves con-
 “formable to its customs; but in the
 “country, our appearance is generally
 “simple as you now see it. By making
 “ourselves slaves to fashion, we should
 “break in upon those moments we can
 “pass more satisfactorily; the example
 “might become contagious in the neigh-
 “bourhood, and our children learn to
 “value themselves more for their exter-
 “nal

“nal appearance, than those virtues we
 “wish to be their greatest recommenda-
 “tion.

“As our acquaintance is confined with-
 “in a narrow circle (indeed the neigh-
 “bourhood admits not of an extensive
 “one), we find but little variation in our
 “amusements; but those, from being ra-
 “tional, are not, like more tumultuous
 “ones, subject to satiety; we read, walk,
 “fish, sometimes, by way of variety, drive
 “round the adjacent villages; but the lat-
 “ter is a luxury, in which we indulge
 “ourselves but sparingly, as we consider
 “walking far more conducive both to the
 “health of ourselves and little ones, who
 “by the too frequent use of carriages,
 “would become enervated and inactive.

“When the weather admits not of our
 “usual rambles, our time is divided be-
 “tween a few social friends, of disposition
 “similar to our own, to which I now flat-
 “ter myself we shall find an agreeable
 “addition; you have, without doubt,
 “Madam, already made some little ac-
 “quaintance

“quaintance in the village, and we shall
 “think ourselves happy in being added to
 “the number. My Eliza, though she has
 “an aversion to ceremonious visits, will
 “take a pleasure in the society of a lady,
 “who appears to be equally a foe to every
 “species of formality; and when inclina-
 “tion happens to prompt a detachment
 “from the more active scenes of life,
 “forget not, my good friend (bowing to
 “my brother) that Benignus will ever
 “be glad to see you. This interview for
 “which we are indebted to accident, will,
 “I hope, be productive of many agreeable
 “ones; the unprotected state of your
 “sister will, in your absence, call for the
 “assistance of some one accustomed to the
 “management of domestic business, tho’
 “I boast no great skill in husbandry, it
 “will be my pleasure to aid her in the
 “cultivation of the meadows adjoining
 “her little dwelling; and should she re-
 “quire any advice in the regulation of
 “her dairy, here is one (taking the hand
 “of

“of his Eliza) whose services she may
 “command at pleasure.”

Our acknowledgments to this worthy pair were proportioned to their civilities, and after the removal of the tea-table we arose to take our leave; but just as we were descending the steps of the summer-house, a heavy shower of rain prevented all thoughts of returning till it abated. We had not long been re-seated, when Benignius, at the request of my brother, favoured us with a recital of what had happened to him since his retreat from college; which from the agreeable manner of his relating it, afforded us much amusement. In some future letter, I will transcribe his adventures for your perusal, but at present have only time to acquaint you of the particular occurrences of the morning, which after a cessation of the rain, were finished in a ramble round the house and gardens, the latter of which, from the dew descending showers, shed around us a thousand new-born sweets. In wandering
 through

through such a variety of mazy walks, in which not a single weed dare raise its humble head, I could not help expressing my surprise, that such a pleasing regularity could be preserved in so large a tract of ground; but my astonishment ceased, on being informed that every peasant in the village by turns assisted in the culture of it. It is the maxim of Benignius to walk round the neighbourhood every morning that the weather permits, and in the course of his rambles, whoever he finds unemployed (if able to become useful) he sends to the assistance of his gardener, who rewards them according to the activity they discover; by this means he is never without a numerous train of labourers, nor do any remain necessitous from want of work, a complaint too often made by those who lay claim to our benevolence. Such an attention to the indigent, I should have supposed productive of much inconvenience to those who, at particular seasons of the year, have need of a larger number of hands

hands than they can constantly employ; had I not found that he who is thus generously attentive to the poor, obviates my objections by some consideration also to those who are more affluent; for in the months of harvest, he suffers none to approach his grounds whose services might in any degree render them beneficial to the farmers; by this considerate conduct he secures to himself the affection, not only of individuals, but of every part of his neighbourhood, and from the care he takes to extirpate indolence, is seldom under the necessity of reproving them for their vices.

I could with pleasure have devoted the day to the society of this agreeable family, but my brother reminding me of an engagement at home, we left them, with an assurance of soon repeating our visit, as I must now my dear Rosella, with the promise of transcribing for her the adventures of Benignus the first leisure hour, and am with much sincerity, &c. &c.

FELICA.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I HAVE at length, my friend, found an opportunity of again addressing you, a satisfaction I have long anticipated, but for which, amidst the parade of bridal visits, it was impossible to find a moment's leisure. Soon after I wrote my last, a letter which my brother received, acquainting him of Lady Ashby's return from Devonshire, obliged us immediately to leave the country, and the death of her uncle having removed the only impediment to their marriage, it was solemnized about a fortnight since with all the eclat their rank demanded. At her ladyship's request I have promised to remain their visitor about six weeks longer, when they propose an excursion to Northamptonshire, and in their return will honour me a few days

days with their company at Elm-hall; by which time I hope also to be favoured with that of my Rosella.

I MIGHT certainly have found sufficient leisure to have before informed you of this important event, but trusting to the papers, a subject on which they seldom remain silent, I deferred writing till a short cessation from the hurry of perpetual congratulations allowed me an afternoon, in which, detached from all society, I could indulge myself in transcribing for your perusal the adventures of Benignius, such an one has at last offered, and with pleasure do I devote it to her whose correspondence affords me a greater share of satisfaction, than any I can find in these tumultuous scenes, in which I am detained only by the respect for one who, though worthy of my sincerest esteem, will never have power to rival in my friendship her to whom it will always be my greatest felicity to subscribe myself

AN UNALTERABLE FRIEND.

T H E

THE
ADVENTURES
OF
BENIGNIUS;

AS RELATED BY HIMSELF, INCLOSED IN
THE FOREGOING.

DEPRIVED of both my parents at an age in which the most tender attentions leave behind them only a trifling impression; I can remember little more than finding myself, at eight years of age, under the guardianship of a worthy clergyman, whose kindness left me no cause to regret the loss of those dear relatives. As he had no children of his own, I became the only object of his care, his precepts, enforced with all the endearment of paternal love, sunk deep into my soul: I revered him for his attention to me in my

K

orphan

orphan state, but more so for his exemplary life, and unaffected piety. The esteem in which he lived, persuaded me that the clerical path of life, was the only road to happiness and honour: I entreated him to think of no other for me, and rejecting the splendid offers made by a distant relation of my father's, of establishing me in the military line, prevailed upon the worthy pastor to enter me at Christ's church. As he had ever made it a rule to oppose, as little as possible, any of my reasonable desires, I met with no great difficulty in gaining him to my purpose, but never shall I forget the salutary lecture which accompanied his compliance.

“Think not Benignius,” said he, “that
 “I wish to bias you in a determination
 “on which in a great measure depends
 “your future happiness in life; but my
 “dear child, in a situation recluse as ours
 “has been, I think it is impossible for you
 “at present to form a true idea of your
 “own particular propensions; attached to
 “me from your infancy, you think no cha-
 “racter

“racter so enviable, so worthy your imi-
 “tation as that in which you behold me.
 “I flatter myself that I should appear to
 “you equally so in any other; there
 “are estimable people in every rank of
 “life; a further acquaintance with the
 “world will convince you that it is
 “not among the clergy only we may
 “look for them. Should you happen to
 “persevere in your resolution, after having
 “been a sufficient time at the university
 “to judge whether your disposition is
 “adapted to the sanctity of the habit you
 “mean to assume, I shall have no objec-
 “tion to your choice. In the meantime,
 “must beg to recommend to you a par-
 “ticular attention to the duties of those
 “who take upon themselves the sacred
 “task of propagating their religion: for
 “remember it is not sufficient that they
 “teach others to be religious, unless
 “strictly so themselves. Whatever pro-
 “fession hereafter appears to you most
 “worthy your pursuit, make it your pe-
 “culiar aim to excel in it; I should be

“forry to see you an indifferent preacher,
 “an inelegant pleader, or an injudicious
 “physician; but more than all, to find
 “that public admiration was in either,
 “rather the object of your studies, than
 “a wish to render yourself beneficial to
 “mankind. You will have a fortune
 “sufficient to exclude you from a neces-
 “sity of attaching yourself to any pro-
 “fession through pecuniary motives; if
 “prompted to it through generous ones,
 “it will establish you to an advantage
 “equal to your most sanguine wishes; as a
 “friend I shall on every occasion take the
 “liberty of offering my advice, but never
 “so far usurp the authority of a guardian
 “as to insist on your being regulated by
 “it, unless coincident with your reason.”

A few days afterwards he took me with
 him to Oxford, where a very short period
 served to convince me, that it is not in-
 deed in retirement we can with certainty
 determine what sphere of life will be most
 conducive to our happiness. The liber-
 tine principles I discovered among my
 clerical

clerical acquaintance, impressed me with ideas very different from those with which the respectable conduct of Mr. Benfield had before inspired me; I beheld religion made use of as a cloak for the most iniquitous proceedings, ridiculed even by its most strict professors. Though disgusted at their behaviour, my benevolent propensities towards mankind in general, prompted me to attribute to their parents, rather than themselves, the charge of their hypocrisy, in having destined them for the church without consulting their inclinations, and by degrees began myself to look upon its restraints in so different a point of view, that what before appeared my most earnest wish, then became my dread. I acquired not from their society any propensities towards immorality, but I perceived it so much easier to preserve the theory of religion than the practice of it, that I feared to take upon myself a character I might disgrace by an attachment to gaieties totally inconsistent with the sacred habit; and from that period banished

all intentions of entering into orders. For some months I applied myself to no particular study, but contented myself merely in making observations on the conduct and manners of those whose establishment in life depended on their application to them. My guardian, from time to time, requested to know the progress of my studies, in which, from their being general, I advanced too slowly to give him any very flattering expectations from my abilities; but though I found in myself no greater prepossession for the practice of physic or the law, than I had before done for that of divinity, I was determined to acquire a sufficient knowledge of each to defend myself from the chicanery of the one, and inhumanity of the other. Nature had formed me with a disposition averse to those little arts to which even men of the most distinguished characters scruple not to stoop; I felt that my heart would no more suffer me to withhold my aid to a patient for the sake of increasing the number of my fees, than

1007 it

it would allow me to prolong the suspense of a client by the prostitution of my veracity. With these sentiments I could not think of attaching myself to any particular profession, but after four years passed (as you then frequently observed) rather in cursory remarks, than any settled course of learning, I left the university as perfectly free from the pedantries of a college education, as those who have never seen one.

THE worthy Benfield, happy at my preference of a state of independence (though the term of his guardianship was not then expired), put me into the possession of my fortune immediately after my return, and leaving to me the sole management of an estate three times as immense as I had supposed it, retired to a small benefice about three miles distant; the only reward he could be prevailed on to accept for his unbounded services.

I HAD now an opportunity of indulging, to their full extent, those liberal dispositions in which nature in the formation of

your friend had been rather too profuse; and my first care was to render every one about me as independent as myself. Following the maxim of my favourite author, I pulled down hovels and erected palaces, was as assiduous in seeking out objects on whom to exercise my benevolence, as many are to avoid them. Alas! I then knew little of mankind's ingratitude; the consequence of this ill-placed liberality, was, that my doors were crowded with impostors; my domestics, from indulgence, became too indolent to perform their daily avocations; and the villagers, instead of pursuing with greater vigour their respective callings, grew insolent and riotous. In short, where I meant to have conferred happiness, I produced dissention, business became a toil, and pleasure their pursuit; the sons and daughters of my tenants, grown proud from my attentions, rose superior to their humble duties; the milk pail no longer graced their ruddy hands, or the sickle their well strung arm. Modern refinement stole so rapidly among them,

them, that it would have been difficult, from external appearances, to have distinguished the daughters of a farmer from a countess, or their brothers from young gentlemen of independent fortunes. Alarmed at the increasing evil, I flew to the venerable rector, and informing him how my good intentions had been frustrated by the ingratitude of my neighbours, intreated him to aid me with his advice on the future regulation of a conduct I too late perceived erroneous.

“It is never too late Benignius,” replied he, “to discover our errors. Yours
 “have proceeded from a source of all
 “others least to be condemned; excess
 “of generosity, indeed, is hardly to be ac-
 “counted one, unless (as in the present
 “instance) rendered so from misappli-
 “cation. In looking upon the gifts of
 “fortune as lent you for the purposes of
 “dispensing happiness, you received them
 “as became a Christian; and have erred
 “only from suffering your benevolence
 “to cast a mist over your reason. You

“ meant to have restored the golden age,
“ and, like many others unacquainted
“ with the world, have found the task too
“ arduous for accomplishment; no matter,
“ you have gained by it a sufficient share
“ of experience to convince you, that
“ wealth to those who have been from
“ birth innured to labour, is as dangerous
“ as a firebrand in the hands of a fool or
“ a madman; and that to contribute to
“ the necessities of such, is enough with-
“ out attending to their wants. You have
“ learnt from it that gratitude and pru-
“ dence are virtues seldom to be found
“ among the uneducated, and the know-
“ ledge you have acquired will guard you
“ in future from the pain of disappoint-
“ ment. The evil of which you complain,
“ is to be remedied only by adopting
“ a plan entirely opposite from that you
“ have hitherto pursued. In a few words,
“ patronize the worthy, encourage the in-
“ dustrious, and assist the wretched; but
“ render none independent, who, from
“ being unacquainted to affluence, would
“ abuse

“abuse the gift. There are thousands in
 “the world who claim our pity, though
 “from the pride of birth withheld from
 “asking it; and to contribute to the
 “assistance of such unfortunate people,
 “without suffering them to feel the obli-
 “gation, is one of the highest satisfactions
 “of which the human heart can be sus-
 “ceptible. A large fortune may soon be
 “dissipated upon indiscriminate objects
 “(few of which have, perhaps, in reality
 “any claim to our benevolence), while a
 “small one, judiciously employed, may
 “enable us to become a general good.”

His kind admonitions were not thrown
 away, I beheld the justice of his remarks,
 and determined in future to be governed
 by them. In the situation I then was, I
 saw it would be vain to attempt a regula-
 tion; but by abandoning it, I should have
 an opportunity of convincing the inhabi-
 tants, that extravagance and ingratitude are
 but ill returns for liberality and confidence.
 I knew no other so well calculated to
 please my romantic taste, but there were
 many

many in which I should be subject to fewer disappointments. I therefore immediately left the estate to be disposed of by my steward, and set out for the metropolis, with only one old domestic, named Bernard, whose care of me from infancy, had peculiarly recommended him to my esteem and patronage.

As my acquaintance in town were most of them men of the world, though I endeavoured in some degree to conform myself to their manners, I at first subjected myself to no small share of ridicule from what they were pleased to style my abstemiousness and conscientious scruples. My constitution might possibly have some time sustained the continual ravages made on it through intemperance and nocturnal revels, but my heart revolted against such abuse of time ; a month passed in dissipation, afforded me a source of self-reproof for three to come. Ever engaged in some futile or dissatisfactory pursuit, I had no leisure for the exercise of dispositions more worthy a reasonable being ; and finding
that

that self-approbation was incompatible with that of my dissipated companions, I resolved in some degree to detach myself from their society, by boarding in some respectable family, where I might partake moderately of the gaieties of life, without launching into its vices and intemperance. Bernard was not long in discovering one perfectly agreeable to my wishes; and, determined to devote a large portion of my time to useful speculations, and the study of human nature, without attracting the observation of others towards myself, I contrived by an economical appearance to divest them of every idea of my real character and fortune; a precaution which procured me a greater degree of satisfaction, than all the respect I should have acquired by their knowledge of it.

THE family consisted only of a worthy couple in the decline of life (of the name of Althrop), their son and two daughters in the bloom of youth and beauty. The eldest of the latter possessed all that dignity of countenance which attracts our admiration

admiration while it infuses respect, but (as I afterwards found) disappointment had taken from her features that vivacity which is the peculiar charm of youth. Her sister, five years younger, I should tell you, at that time, displayed all the winning graces and attractive gentleness which, more alluring, creeps into the heart : but she is now before you, and probably you may think them still discernible, though matured by seven revolving summers.

WITHOUT being sensible of any extraordinary partiality towards either, I found in the society of this amiable family all the satisfaction I had in vain sought for in more extensive circles. My conduct towards them was so free from every species of modern gallantry, that all reserve was banished from among us ; the fear of being overwhelmed with unmeaning compliments neither compelled them to conceal their numberless accomplishments, or behave with a restraint destructive of felicity ; in a word, I found myself treated as a friend, and sought not to be more particularly

particularly distinguished. After some weeks residence with Mr. Althrop, I learnt that he filled a small post under the government, the inconsiderable salary arising from which was their sole support. Though it enabled them, with much economy, to make a creditable appearance, I beheld with infinite regret that it was insufficient to establish his children in any way of life by which they might be able to subsist, when death should rob them of their father. The wish of rendering myself instrumental to their future happiness, made me assiduous in discovering the means. With merit and abilities which would have done honour to the most exalted sphere of life, young Althrop was doomed to the humble capacity of assistant in the shop of a neighbouring mercer. By the partiality of a rich uncle he had received the most liberal education; but after having many years adopted him as his son, the old gentleman, in a fit of dotage, married a young girl he had brought up on the same charitable plan, and an increasing

creasing family of his own soon rendering him unmindful of his brother's, the poor youth returned to the paternal roof without any proofs of his uncle's affection, but what served to make him more unhappy than if he had never left it. The finest abilities, unless accompanied with some degree of interest in the world, have but little opportunity of displaying themselves, or of becoming beneficial to the possessor; destitute of any, sooner than lead a life of total inactivity, he refused not to render himself useful in the shop of an acquaintance; and too much depressed to enter into company, by whose assistance he might probably have advanced himself to a situation more worthy of his merit, he devoted all his leisure hours to the improvement of his sisters.

My knowledge of his disagreeable situation was followed by the wish of placing him in one more easy; but how to accomplish it, without wounding a delicacy which had hitherto withheld him from ever making me the confident of his contracted

tracted circumstances, was a task to which I found myself unequal. Several times was I prompted secretly to convey into his hand a sum which might procure him some more eligible employ, without discovering myself as his benefactor. But the admonitions of the worthy Benfield had sunk deep into my heart, and recollection convinced me that I had already experienced the ill effects of conferring independence. I beheld the folly of indulging such an intention towards one whose prudence I had not yet essayed, whose discretion, though conspicuous in the station he was then in, might probably be less so when master of his conduct and unlimited in his expences, which restrained me from the indulgence of my benevolent propensions.

THE idea was perhaps uncharitable, but it was dictated by experience, a monitor of all others most unfavourable to benevolence; one which makes itself be heard though we are deaf to every other. The wish of serving him remained, but prudence

dence compelled me to restrain it till an opportunity offered of rendering my services beneficial, without exposing him to the temptations attendant on a state of independence. But while meditating on the means of conferring happiness on the son, an accident happened to the father which suffered me no longer to defer my good intentions. By a malignant fever he was deprived of abilities to perform the duties of his office, and the unhappy family saw themselves on the point of experiencing all the vicissitudes of poverty, without a friend to aid them in their distress.

THREE days had elapsed without discovering to me but by their tears the extent of their misfortune, when young Althrop, returning one evening from the mercer's, without observing me reading at the window, began lamenting in the most pathetic style the dangerous indisposition of his father, the reflection of which was rendered still more poignant by the sudden death of Mr. Mason the mercer, whom he served.

“Alas! Madam,” said he, looking at his
mother

mother with filial affection and concern,
 “ this unexpected stroke heightens a mis-
 “ fortune before sufficiently distressing.
 “ I was in hopes of supplying to you, in
 “ some inconsiderable degree, the loss I
 “ fear we shall sustain by the illness of a
 “ parent who soon may be no more ; but
 “ even that consolation is now denied me ;
 “ the shop will be disposed of, and the next
 “ possessor probably have no occasion for
 “ my services ; had we a friend by whose
 “ kindness I might be enabled to succeed
 “ him, happiness might still be ours ; but
 “ friends, alas ! are few to those who need
 “ them greatly as ourselves !” A deep
 sigh accompanied these words, and just
 then observing me in the room, over-
 whelmed with confusion he arose and left
 it. I followed him, and having overtaken
 him in the passage——
 “ STAY, Mr. Althrop,” said I, “ let not
 “ my presence prevent you from pursuing
 “ such an interesting subject. I am going
 “ to my apartment, therefore hurry not
 “ away ; but when you have leisure, I
 “ should

“ should be glad to be informed more
 “ particularly of the nature of those dis-
 “ tresses of which you so affectingly com-
 “ plain. Assure yourself it is not an in-
 “ quiry to which I am prompted by cu-
 “ riosity alone ; though my abilities are
 “ small, probably it may be in my power
 “ to render you some trifling service.”

“ INDEED, Sir,” replied the poor young
 man, “ I had nothing more to say, there-
 “ fore beg I may not be the means of
 “ your retiring : the sight of a mother
 “ and sisters valuable to my heart, whom
 “ I fear will soon be sinking into wretch-
 “ edness and sorrow, forced from me com-
 “ plaints which I knew not till afterwards
 “ were uttered in your presence. I la-
 “ mented not myself, but them. Your
 “ friendly offers of assistance merit my
 “ sincerest confidence ; and by confessing
 “ that this sudden stroke of Providence
 “ in afflicting my father, has withdrawn
 “ every means of subsistence from his un-
 “ happy family, is conveying to you in a
 “ very few words the extent of our mis-
 “ fortune,

“fortune, which to-day has been rendered
 “still more poignant by the death of
 “Mr. Mason; however incapacitated you
 “may be to redress them, there is a de-
 “gree of satisfaction even in knowing
 “ourselves pitied.—But I affect you, Sir,
 “too greatly;”—observing the sympa-
 thetic tear stealing down my cheek.

TAKING out my handkerchief to hide the
 rising emotions of my heart, I desired him
 to return with me into the dining room.
 Mrs. Althrop and her daughters were yet
 there, and on seeing us come back to-
 gether, pleasure animated their features
 as greatly as if some benign spirit had
 whispered them of my kind intentions.
 As soon as we had seated ourselves, I
 told him in the presence of those amiable
 relatives, to look no further for a friend;
 but in me behold one ready to assist him
 with any sum he believed necessary to
 establish him as the successor to Mr. Ma-
 son; a situation in which he would be en-
 abled, with industry, to become a blessing
 to his family. Their surprise for some
 moments,

moments deprived them of the power of speech; an happiness so unlooked for, left them even without words to express their gratitude, and to save myself in some measure from the affecting scene which must necessarily follow, I stole out of the room to give them leisure to recover; my absence restored what my presence had deprived them of. Before I could reach the door of my apartment, I found myself encompassed both by his mother and sisters, whose grateful effusions softened me to more than woman's tenderness. It was the first moment of my life in which I had found myself susceptible of the powers of beauty, but the traces of recent grief in some measure dissipated from the face of the amiable Eliza, by the prospect of coming happiness, rendered her at that moment the most interesting object I ever remembered to have gazed upon; the ardent and unaffected blessings she bestowed on me for my friendship to her brother, threw over her features such an air of piety and sweetness,

that

that however unbounded had been my services, the sight of her in such an heavenly attitude must more than have repaid them; I had always beheld them both in the light of estimable and agreeable women; and though I had looked upon the youngest peculiarly so, she had never till then appeared so truly irresistible. I tore myself from them to conceal the pleasure she inspired, and shutting myself in my closet, abandoned me to all the satisfactory reflections arising from the thoughts of having made them happy; which were doubly enhanced from having been induced to it from no interested motives; a subject on which I should have been tempted to self reproach, had my attachment to the sister been perceivable to me before I had promised the establishment of the brother.

A FEW days afterwards I presented him with fifteen hundred pounds, which was nearly two hundred more than the price at which the stock was estimated. The grateful youth received it with the warmest acknowledgments,

knowledgments, but would not be satisfied without my acceptance of his note, both for interest and principal, which he declared he should receive with pain, unless permitted to look upon it as borrowed. I refused it not, because he might less sensibly feel the obligation : and the assiduity with which he attached himself to business, added to the tender interest which he shewed in every thing which related to the felicity of his parents, soon proved to me that I had for the first time in my life united happiness to merit.

To lessen their expences, he took upon himself the care of his sisters ; and returning health soon afterwards permitting Mr. Althrop to resume his office, the worthy couple were again restored to comfort.

It was not till after her removal to her brother, that I began to find how ill I could support the absence of Eliza, a place every day more pleasing to me while enlivened by her innocence and amusive converse, now no longer afforded the
smallest

smallest degree of pleasure, though happy to see her under the protection of a relation whose attention to her welfare I was sensible could not even have been exceeded by my own; I could not help wishing that the care of establishing her felicity had been reserved wholly for myself.

My faithful Bernard, from whom I never, from the earliest infancy, had accustomed myself to conceal a wish, had beheld with infinite regret my disappointments on first emerging from retirement; he saw me still anxious in the promotion of others happiness, yet unsettled in my own. My dissatisfactions and dejection after the young ladies ceasing to reside with their parents, was too evident to escape his notice, too plain for him to mistake its source. Believing that the superiority of my birth and fortune was the only combatant against my passion, he ventured to oppose it with the most specious arguments in favour of its object, who by some magnetic charm, attracted

L

alike

alike the esteem both of her equals and inferiors.

HAD my scruples in reality originated from any interested considerations (which he not unjustly styled the cankerworms of happiness), his advice would have induced me to have made her an immediate offer of my hand and fortune; but the fear of her being influenced by gratitude rather than any spontaneous predilection in my favour, withheld me from the avowal of my affection; I knew that in confiding my secret to Mrs. Althrop, I should secure myself a powerful advocate, but I dreaded least her advice should have greater influence over the mind of her amiable daughter, than partiality for my person. In short I feared every thing, because I wished to owe all to love, nothing to obedience or gratitude.

WHILE in this irresolute state of mind, I received a letter from Mr. Benfield, intimating some misconduct in my steward, which would oblige me to make an immediate journey into Lincolnshire. Still withheld

withheld from the disclosure of my passion by scruples more delicate than reasonable, I took leave of this estimable family without betraying the most distant hint of my attachment; and desiring from time to time, to be particularly informed of their welfare, I departed from the metropolis with inexpressible regret. It was but the dawn of day when I set out; insensible to the rising beauties of the god of morn, I threw myself back in the chaise, and inattentive to every surrounding scene, had in this melancholy attitude drove seven miles from London, in the full indulgence of my gloomy ideas, from which I was roused by the word “deliver,” and a pistol at my breast. Not the least intimidated at the suddenness of the attack, I lifted up my eyes towards the bold adventurer, and beheld in him a figure that must have shocked a stoic. It was a young man of the most engaging countenance, habited as a clergyman, and apparently little more than twenty years of age; the earnestness with which I looked on him, while pre-

paring to obey a mandate, to which I was less induced from fear than pity, deprived him of his courage, and the weapon of destruction fell from his trembling hand, seeing him in this defenceless state, my servant was going to secure him, but humanity permitted not the deed. Twenty guineas was all I had about me, that I gave him, and advising him in future to pay more respect to the sacred habit he assumed, drove on without suffering him to be pursued. While meditating on the miseries to which a being of such amiable aspect and apparent sensibility must have been exposed ere capable of adopting such a dangerous plan of life, the hinder wheel of my chaise suffered a total wreck from the negligence of a carman; and unable to proceed any further till another could be got, I walked gently along the road, sending Bernard to procure me one at a village which lay just before us.

A HEAVY shower of rain obliged me to seek shelter, I left the road and walked
towards

towards a ruinous little freestone building, which from its contiguity to the church-yard, I judged to be the parsonage; seeing nobody near, from whom I could gain the liberty of admittance till more favourable weather. I rang at the gate, which was presently opened by a little girl of about fourteen years of age, in a charity dress, and telling her that the rain had obliged me to seek shelter till the arrival of my chaise, I begged leave to sit down in the porch till the shower subsided. A visible confusion appeared upon the poor girl's features, she told me I was welcome; but incoherently stammered out something concerning the illness of her mistress, whom in the absence of her master she feared would die with grief and want.

“WHERE is your mistress, young woman?” exclaimed I eagerly, “lead me to her, if she is in distress probably I can assist her.”

“HEAVEN bless you, Sir, for your goodness, but indeed I dare not, she never

“ fees strangers.” At that moment a tremulous voice from the parlour inquired “ Who was there.”

TAKING advantage of the opened door, I followed her into the room, and, gracious God! how great was the picture of distress which then presented itself before my eyes. On a ragged old couch which appeared to have been made some centuries past, sat, or rather leant, on elegant looking female of about eighteen years of age, apparently sinking under the weight of pain with which she was oppressed, and by her stood a cradle in which lay a lovely infant not four months old; her dress, which shewed only the poor remains of former splendor, conspired with every part of the furniture to convince me more powerfully than all the pathos of expression, that from a life of affluence, she was reduced to the abyss of misery; but the dignity of her features, though under all these disadvantages, forbade me to approach her without the greatest awe. My unexpected entrance spread a momentary glow
over

over her expressive countenance, but it was soon succeeded by the most pallid hue. Advancing a few steps nearer :

“ Pardon, Madam,” said I, “ the intrusion of a stranger who has been driven
 “ by the storm to take refuge in your
 “ porch. Chance brought me hither, and
 “ humanity now detains me. I learnt from
 “ some broken sentences of your domestic
 “ that her mistress was unhappy, was distressed!— my heart prompted a more
 “ minute inquiry into those sorrows of
 “ which she so affectingly complained,
 “ and her refusal of admittance induced
 “ me to appear before you without the
 “ forms of introduction. If my presence
 “ is painful to you, I will immediately
 “ withdraw ; but I shall not depart at ease
 “ unless you condescend to communicate
 “ to me the means by which I may be
 “ enabled to remove some part of that
 “ depression which preys upon your health.
 “ If not beyond the reach of money, fear
 “ not to confide in me, Heaven has blessed
 “ me with the means, and with it the

“with of conferring comfort upon all who
“need it.”

DURING this address she gained courage enough to raise her languid eyes towards me. My sudden appearance had impressed her with a thousand fears, the least of which, she afterwards acknowledged, was that I came to seize the last remains of furniture which even when disposed of would afford a sum too inconsiderable to satisfy the demands of a creditor indefatigable in their ruin.

WITH streaming eyes the unhappy beauty informed me that she was the daughter of a Baronet in the West of England, who had no other children than herself; at fifteen years of age she happened to be on a visit at Oxford, and accidentally became acquainted with a young gentleman, of the name of Elwood, whose amiable qualifications, and engaging person, wrought so powerfully upon her inexperienced heart, that she was never afterwards capable of listening either to the voice of interest or reason. Without any other possessions than
a liberal

a liberal education, this unfortunate young man (bred to the church, in which he had little hopes of arriving at greater preferments than a fellowship and inconsiderable curacies) had the misfortune to have an equal attachment for her; and both too young to reflect on the inevitable misery which must necessarily succeed an indulgence of their affection, a clandestine marriage was agreed upon, without even attempting to procure the concurrence of a parent upon whom all their dependence rested. As she made no one the confident of her intentions, she deprived herself of the benefit of advice; and waiting only till her lover was able to procure a curacy at a distance from the university, precipitated herself into ruin, without so much as leaving a letter behind her whereby her father might be informed of her imprudent step. A northern expedition, added to other unavoidable expences, soon dissipated the little money they had in hand. With much economy they for some few months subsisted on the poor pittance

allowed him by his parsimonious rector. But finding that thirty pounds a-year was entirely insufficient to nature's wants (superfluities they wished not for), necessity constrained them to become supplicants to her father; that father whom they had so lately deemed unworthy of their consideration! Thinking that a personal application would be the most effectual, the poor lady, unable to support the expence of chaise hire, took a place in the machine, and after two days journey, during which the agitation of her mind exceeded all description, arrived at a place where she hoped to have found pity, though the consciousness of her imprudence almost forbade her to expect it. The first news she heard, on alighting at the inn, was that the Baronet had that day married his housekeeper. Surprise deprived her of abilities to make further inquiry: but determined at all events to see him, she set out alone towards the abbey. In going through the park, she met the steward, and knowing the influence he once had with his master, entreated

entreated him to be her advocate in imploring his forgiveness. The worthy man, distressed at beholding a young lady, who was once the pride and joy of her family, reduced to the necessity of coming on foot to solicit the pardon of her father, assured her, with tearful eyes, that he would do his best; but a despondent wave of the head convinced her that she had not much to expect. On arriving at the house, he dared not to introduce her, but leaving her on a bench in the garden, went into the drawing-room to his master; and falling upon his ancient knees, entreated his indulgence in the only favour he had ever yet presumed to solicit during his servitude. The old gentleman, little thinking to what he was going to consent, bid him ask freely, and fear not a denial. “Then, “Sir,” said the honest man, “condescend “to accompany me to the garden.”

WITHOUT hesitation the Baronet attended him, wondering every step at the peculiarity of his manner. On arriving near the

the bench where sat his daughter, horror and indignation overspread his features—

“Is this, Trueman,” said he, “the
 “favour you meant to entreat of me? tell
 “that unhappy woman, she who could so
 “soon forget the duty of a child, has here
 “no parent: from the moment I heard
 “of her imprudent marriage I abjured
 “the tie. Other connections will in fu-
 “ture obliterate her from my remem-
 “brance, as her folly has from my heart.
 “For your officious kindness, the only
 “reward you must expect is immediate
 “dismissal.” And turning upon his heel
 he retreated precipitately to the house.

DISTRESSED at his ill success, the sympa-
 thizing domestic used all the arguments
 he could think of to console his poor
 young mistress under her misfortune; and
 after reconducting her to the inn, begged
 an address to the village where she lived;
 intending, perhaps, to contribute towards
 her happiness in conveying to her some
 trifling part of the little he had saved in
 the

the service of his master. But thanking him for his kindness, which she assured him would never be forgotten, she forbore acquainting him with what she wished should remain secret, and committing herself again to the care of the coachman, returned to her husband with a heart almost broken at the prospect of increasing misery.

Nothing but his tenderness she averred could have supported her through the succeeding scenes of penury, but that, while Providence added to it health, enabled her to combat every ill. To add to her distresses, she soon afterwards became a mother, and the insufficiency of his salary obliged her to part with all those ornaments of female beauty with which, in the days of her prosperity, she had wont to be adorned; this, though it supported her through her illness, was but a temporary relief, increasing care, and a constitution too delicate to bear fatigue, obliged her to the additional expence of keeping a girl to assist her in the task of domestic business, which subjected them

them to more necessities than they had before experienced. Without a prospect of advancement, and from the sacred habit precluded from seeking a subsistence by more humble means, this unfortunate young couple continued to exist in penurious gentility, until nothing remained either of cloaths or furniture with which they could supply a want. As it was with the greatest secrecy they had disposed of their little valuables, none were acquainted with the distress they laboured under, until some trifling demands, which they were unable to comply with, forced from them the dreadful tale. The knowledge of it, instead of exciting pity, drew upon them others, and alarmed lest the consequence of these frequent denials should end in personal confinement, Mr. Elwood tore himself from the presence of his beloved Louisa, affirming, that he would never more behold her unless he returned with ability to satisfy his creditors, and make her happy. This determination, which he immediately afterwards put into execution,

execution, almost deprived her of reason; any thing she could have borne but the absence of one whose presence could alone support her under such accumulated misery, and the deprivation of it, added to her fears for his safety, preying upon a constitution naturally delicate, had reduced her to the languid state in which I found her on my entrance.

PITY for her distress permitted me not to reflect upon the cause from whence it was derived, her disobedience had already been followed by its punishment; all then that remained to the sympathetic heart was to alleviate it. Forgetting that I had been stript of all my cash, my hand insensibly strayed towards my pocket, when to my utter mortification, I recollected the adventure of the morning; disappointment for some moments restrained the powers of speech; but recovering from my confusion, I assured her of assistance when arrived at the end of my journey, and as some apology for not being able to accompany my professions with immediate proofs

proofs of their sincerity, acquainted her with my recent attack ; in speaking of which, I particularly expatiated on the amiable aspect of the highwayman, little supposing how nearly she was interested in the relation.

In a moment her beautiful features were overspread with a death-like paleness, and sinking back on the couch, all sensation immediately forsook her. The girl, motionless through terror, was incapable of affording her the most trifling assistance ; without knowing what I did, I flew to a beaufet, which stood ready open, in hopes of finding volatiles, and fortunately a bottle of hartshorn was the first thing which presented itself ; after applying it some time to her nostrils and temples without success, I sent the girl into the yard for water, and observing some cups on a shelf over the chimney, was going to reach one, when my eyes were attracted by an object which reduced me almost to a situation similar to her own ; judge my horror, to behold in miniature over it the
 person

person I had been describing to Mrs. Elwood before her fainting! the mystery was now unravelled, I wondered not at the distress into which my relation had involved her; but the discovery weakened not my desires of restoring her to life and happiness. In about half an hour I had the satisfaction to behold her lips again begin to resume their wonted beauty, but returning life served only to augment a misery which every moment became more poignant. Observing the attention and assiduity with which I awaited her recovery, a gleam of grateful sensibility diffused itself over her countenance, and rising from her seat, she threw herself on her knees before me.

In a strain the most affecting and pathetic, she owned that from my description she feared the robber to have been her husband; and in terms that must have melted the most obdurate heart, entreated me to think not harshly of a man whom nature had formed honest, but whom wretchedness and despair had rendered criminal;

criminal ; accusing herself as the sole source of his misfortunes and his crimes. “ It is to me, unfortunate, ill-judging woman ! ” cried she, “ that he owes this forgetfulness of his duty to mankind and his creator, but for me he had been happy, but to provide for one whose affection has been his ruin, he precipitates himself into vice and infamy, and braves even the horrors of an ignominious death ! ”

A FLOOD of tears accompanied these words, which I was endeavouring to assuage by fresh assurances of my pity and protection, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and the unfortunate Elwood, with haggard looks and dishevelled hair, presented himself before us.

THE sight of me hanging over his weeping Louisa, suspended the exclamation which was breaking from his lips, he ventured not to approach us until throwing himself prostrate on the floor, with hands uplifted, he at once expressed his contrition for his crime and acknowledgment

ledgment to Heaven for its lenity towards him. To do justice to the succeeding scene, would require more descriptive abilities than I am master of; suffice it to say, that I left him penitent and happy, and repairing to my chaise, which was waiting for me in the road, I pursued my journey, thankful to Providence that the sensibility of my heart had saved me from the painful reflection of having exposed to justice an object far more unfortunate than criminal. How many are there in the world, from woe grown desperate, that are equally so, yet from the strictness of our laws precluded pardon; when, could their prosecutors take but a momentary survey of the miseries which induced the crime, their pangs would be more acute than sentence to the condemned. There are, according to my ideas, no rank of people more pitiable than those who are bred to professions which oblige them to maintain an appearance more than adequate to their income; of this the inferior order of clergy in particular

cular are an example : from being long accustomed to the luxuries and extravagance of the university, they are condemned (rather than appointed) to a small cure in a country village, which will oftentimes barely procure them the necessaries of life; in this deplorable state, they drag on a burthensome existence precluded from associating with the world, because their contracted income permits not the expence, yet, in compliance to custom, obliged to appear beyond it; as an additional aggravation to the evil, they are denied the privilege of enlarging their finances by means which, though they would subject a clergyman to contempt, would in others be accounted meritorious; and are consequently constrained to labour under the numerous vicissitudes of poverty without the power of lessening them by industry; a hardship confined wholly to themselves. A husbandman with seven shillings a week is of the two most enviable, the latter from having never experienced the elegances of life, eats his
dumpling

dumpling in content, and envies not the dainties of his superiors, while the former, long habituated to its refinements, regrets his humble lot, and while preaching to his flock patience and resignation to the decrees of Providence, cannot forbear murmuring himself at its unequal dispensations.

I AM wandering from my narrative; but such, my good friend, were the reflections which employed my mind during the remainder of my journey; from which not even the loved idea of my Eliza could detach me long enough, to obliterate one moment from my memory the ill fated Elwood. The recent scene of distress I had been witness to, was too deeply impressed to leave me susceptible of pleasure, till the means of alleviating it was permitted me, a satisfaction in which I could not indulge myself till I arrived at P.....

WHEN I had reached within a small space of the village, the melancholy tolling of the passing bell, threw an additional gloom over my spirits; I could not resist the desire of inquiring whose happy shade it
was

was ushering into eternity; when Bernard inspired with equal curiosity, learnt from a passer by, that it was the guardian of my youth, the inestimable Benfield. The pleasure I had proposed myself in embracing him, was now converted into sorrow. I beheld myself in a wide expanse, blest with a plentiful estate, yet destitute of a friend or counsellor: in the bitterness of my heart I could hardly help arraigning that Providence which seldom permits unmixed enjoyments, to convince us of our imperfect state dashes our highest pleasure with the cup of gall.

WHILE indulging these dissatisfactory ideas, my chaise stopped at the parsonage, and with melancholy step, I entered the little parlour where I had so oft received the precepts of instruction from lips now closed in death. Without power to inquire into the particulars of a departure, I knew must have been sudden, from my never having been made acquainted with its cause. I threw myself upon the first chair I met with, and in the fulness of my heart

heart wept aloud; somewhat relieved by this indulgence of my tears, I begged to be conducted to the chamber which contained the remains of one in death so much lamented, while living so deservedly esteemed, and on ascending the staircase, found my grief not singular; the room, crowded with the friends and dependants of the deceased, resounded with sighs and complaints; the stroke from being unexpected was the more acute. I learnt from one of the weeping attendants (who had served him in the capacity of housekeeper) that her master had that very morning departed from the vicarage in perfect health; but on entering the church to perform the service of the day, had been seized with an apoplectic fit, from which he no more recovered. Looking upon me as the friend most valuable to his heart, she entreated me not to leave the house till after his interment; and presenting me with the keys, declared that no one had taken the most trifling step towards acquainting themselves with the state of his affairs;

affairs; an inquiry she had been determined to reserve for me alone, though in the agitation of her mind, she knew not how she should have informed me of the melancholy event, had not my unexpected arrival saved her from the painful task. The honest principles of a domestic, who from the unlimited confidence placed in her, had the greatest opportunity of turning this event to her own advantage, so prepossessed me in her favour, that I resolved, however ill provided for she might happen to be in her master's will, she should not go unrequited for her integrity: and after taking a mournful embrace of the venerable clay cold corse, I assumed a sufficient share of composure for an investigation which I thought might probably lead me to some discovery concerning the wishes of the departed respecting his interment. It was a suggestion unworthy one who had the smallest knowledge of his heart; the care of his immortal part had left no room for a particular attention to his earthly one.

I found

I found myself his executor with a bequest of fifteen hundred pounds, three hundred to the servant beforementioned, and the remainder of his property, after the payment of his debts and a few trifling legacies, to be divided at discretion among his poor parishioners. Conscious that one who despised all pomp and ceremony while living, could have no desire of sepulchral honours, I determined that his interment should be conducted as privately as possible, consistent with the respect due to so venerable a character; but to testify my esteem more powerfully than by magnificence, I caused his remains to be deposited in a mausoleum I had built to receive my own; and in opposition to the modern unnatural custom of deserting our friends the moment life forsakes them, paid the last tribute to departed worth, attended them to the silent tomb, and blending my tears with the dust which inclosed them for ever from my sight, wafted a prayer to heaven for their speedy ascension to its blissful regions.

M

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ON my return from the funeral, I found many written applications for the benefice, then vacant by the death of this estimable friend, which were soon succeeded by as many personal ones; but though there were among them several respectable young men, my heart pleaded too powerfully in favour of the unfortunate Elwood to permit me to dispose of it to another, while it presented me with an opportunity of conveying peace and happiness to his wounded mind. I dismissed them with the most painful sensations that can possibly inspire a soul which feels for more distresses than it is capacitated to relieve, but conscious that none had greater claim to pity than him to whom I meant to give it, a secret approbation accompanied the act.

AFTER taking every necessary step towards the fulfilling of Mr. Bernfield's last desires, I despatched Bernard to acquaint Elwood and his Louisa of the preferment which awaited them, and accompanying the intelligence with a note sufficient to enable

enable them to leave the neighbourhood with credit, desired to see them immediately at the vicarage. Such an unexpected turn of fortune affected the constitution of the latter almost as powerfully as the distresses she had before experienced, it was some days before she found herself able to undertake the journey, but after having recovered her serenity, they set forward with hearts glowing with the warmest gratitude.

THE reception they met with, added to the agreeableness of the situation in which they found themselves settled, very soon dissipated those painful sensations which at first inspired them. I had the satisfaction of beholding them not only happy in each other, but productive of felicity to every one about them; that piety of heart which had only been suppressed (not extinguished) in the moment of despair, now shone forth with brightest splendor, they esteemed me as their guardian angel; yet in revering the hand which had snatched them from the dreadful preci-

pice, and restored them to peace and virtue, forgot not that benevolence receives greater satisfaction from its own reflections, than from the repeated acknowledgments of those it has made happy.

AFTER discharging a steward, whom according to the intelligence of my lamented friend, I indeed, upon inspection found entirely unworthy of the unlimited confidence I had reposed in him, I entreated Elwood to take upon him the care of my estates until such time as I could meet with one better adapted to the trust; and leaving them to the quiet possession of those tranquil pleasures nature so plentifully bestows on those who are formed for its enjoyments, prepared once more to revisit the spot in which I had first become sensible of the essential difference between love and friendship. The harmony which subsisted at the vicarage, their mutual wish to please, and the lively, yet matron-like deportment of Mrs. Elwood, had renewed in my heart an idea, which three months absence, added to the hurry in which I

had

had been immerfed by the fudden death of Mr. Benfield, had fcarce left room for. I could no longer exift at fuch a diftance from the object of my heart's fupremeft wifh, the uncertainty of her health, her happinefs, (of which I had received no particular account from Mr. Althrop) permitted me not a moment's eafe. Without propofing to myfelf any particular plan, I fet out for London; and on arriving there, was juft going to prefent myfelf before her, when a thought occurred which at once promifed me the pleafure of her fociety, and a relief from thofe delicate fcruples with which I had been until then oppreffed.

THE failure of a capital banker juft at that juncture, gave me an opportunity of feigning myfelf ruined. It was the firft time in my life that I had ever defcended to the fervility of deception, but my circumftances required it; and the moft rigid cynic will have candour enough to make a diftinction between falfehoods intended to the prejudice of others, and thofe meant

only to satisfy an innocent curiosity. Instead of going to her father's, I sat down and penned a note to young Althrop, acquainting him with my pretended embarrassment, and desired his immediate attendance at the coffee-house, hinting that my affairs would for some time constrain me to be invisible.

In a few minutes he arrived, and with a countenance truly expressive of his grief at my misfortune, entreated me immediately to leave a place too public under circumstances which required concealment. "My house," added he with tearful eyes, "and all I can command shall in future be at the service of my estimable benefactor, there you may rest in safety, a short period will, I flatter myself, enable me not only to refund the capital I am possessed of through your generosity, but also to shew my gratitude more powerfully than by expression; until when, my respected, my valuable friend, deny me not the satisfaction of affording you an asylum: suffer

“suffer me to carry on the business for
 “yourself, I doubt not but additional
 “success will yet succeed an undertaking
 “in which I shall engage with greater
 “pleasure than when, enabled by your
 “bounty, I took upon myself the shop.”

THE gratitude of this young man, and the unfeigned zeal which he shewed in my welfare, affected me beyond description. Were I to find all men who had experienced equal proofs of my benevolence like him, thought I, my disgust of the world in general would soon give place to sentiments more generous. I should yet pronounce it possible to be happy in the power of making others so, a truth I have sometimes been inclined to doubt, from the ingratitude I have met with. The idea of making the experiment on those among my friends and acquaintance whose obligations to me were greatest, at that moment operated so forcibly on my mind, that I was near discovering the deception I was practising; but recollecting myself, I assured Althrop, that though I could not

think of taking any part of his profits to myself, I would gladly accept the offer of making his house my home, until such time as my affairs should be in some measure arranged, and stepping into a coach which he had previously ordered, accompanied him to L— street.

THE first object which struck my eyes, on entering the shop, was my Eliza talking to a servant in a rich livery, who appeared to have just committed to her hands a letter. On sight of me, the carnation hue immediately forsook her cheeks. “Ah! Sir, are we indeed so happy as to have you once more among us?” was all she could articulate; and leaning against the counter, it was not till frequent applications had been made to her smelling bottle that she had power to attend us to the parlour. Attributing this sudden indisposition to the sensibility of her heart on having learnt my supposed misfortunes from her brother, I begged her to be in no concern on my account; adding, that to find that there was yet such characters in

in the world as disinterested friends, fully compensated for the unkindness of my fate, which, however disagreeable, was far superior to that of many, perhaps in the moment in which I was speaking, as undeservedly unhappy. I was mistaken, she had been out, and knew not even of my being in town, till the instant in which she saw me: instead of relieving her, what I had uttered served only to increase her embarrassment; she looked first on one, then on the other of us, as if desirous of an explanation of what I had been saying; but the big tear trembling in her eye prevented the desired inquiry, and to hide the agitation of her mind, she arose from her seat and precipitately left the room.

“What on earth,” said Althrop, as she went out, “can have occasioned the uncommon dejection which has lately taken possession of this once sprightly girl! till within these few months, she was all life and pleasantry, but is now continually in tears; the most advantageous offer has lately been made her by a

“ merchant who acquired a partiality for
 “ her some few weeks since, while on a
 “ visit to an old school-fellow at Hamp-
 “ ton, which she rejects with the most de-
 “ termined perseverance, though the per-
 “ son in question has merit and qualifica-
 “ tions sufficient to create a tenderness in
 “ any one whose heart was not previously
 “ engaged. I wish, my worthy friend,
 “ you would condescend to take upon
 “ yourself the task of bringing her to rea-
 “ son; your advice will, perhaps, have
 “ greater influence than that of her
 “ parents or myself. She has just now
 “ been taking a letter from his servant,
 “ which, as she has done many former
 “ ones, I doubt not but she will commit
 “ to the flames, without even giving her-
 “ self the trouble to peruse it. I am far
 “ from wishing her to marry one man
 “ while prejudiced in favour of another;
 “ but unconscious of any such partiality,
 “ I should be happy to see her behave
 “ with a greater degree of prudence; for
 “ while in no danger of having her incli-
 “ nations

“nations forced by parents who are as
 “anxious for her happiness as herself,
 “why should she indulge a melancholy
 “which preys upon her constitution, and
 “damps the felicity of every one about
 “her? Pardon me, good Sir, for engaging
 “so large a share of your attention on a
 “subject so disinteresting, but the manner
 “in which she just now exposed herself
 “before you permitted me not to remain
 “silent.”

WHAT I had been listening to, made too
 great an impression upon my heart to suf-
 fer me to reply intelligibly. From what
 he had said, I had too much reason to sup-
 pose that some secret prepossession with-
 held her from accepting the merchant's
 offer; but as I had never in the most tri-
 fling degree made known to her the passion
 with which she had inspired me, I could
 not indulge the smallest hope or idea of
 being myself the object; though the excla-
 mation uttered on my unexpected appear-
 ance, flattered me with that of being hap-
 py in her esteem.

At

At supper she again made her appearance, but seemingly with a heart far more oppressed than when I saw her in the afternoon. With tender sollicitude I inquired into the cause of her dejection; and her reply, accompanied with the blush of innocence, wrought so powerfully upon my heart, that to relieve her from the uneasiness she expressed at my misfortune, I could hardly forbear acknowledging it to be fictitious: but the wish of first discovering the motive of her refusing the husband proposed to her, withheld me from the avowal; though I could not restrain myself from assuring her, that the sympathy and condolence of a heart amiable as her's, afforded me greater satisfaction than I could have experienced from the possession of the sum of which I had been defrauded.

THE next day I employed in writing an account of the sudden change in my circumstances to the several acquaintance with whom I had been most intimate, on my first arrival in London, and added, that

that from the friendship they had professed for me, and the style in which they lived, I flattered myself with the hopes of procuring, through their interest, some post under the government, which might in a small degree help to lessen the weight of my misfortunes. To some of these letters I received no answer; to others, a few lines of condolence, but none of consolation; ambiguous expressions, which could neither be interpreted as a real intention of serving me, or of an absolute refusal. In a word, I discovered friendship to be (in general) merely professional, and therefore determined to try the force of gratitude.

I ATTENDED no longer the levee of the great, or teased them with repeated solicitations; but directing my hopes towards a rank of beings whose former obligations I should have thought must have constrained them to pity and assist me, I wrote to all the principal inhabitants of a village grown wealthy by my munificence; and in terms that must have melted the most
unfeeling

unfeeling heart, represented myself in a state too distressful to exist without the assistance of the benevolent. Would you credit it, Sir, that among so many families made happy by my bounty, not one was to be found in which was a heart replete with sympathy or gratitude? their own obligations were forgotten, and the woes of their benefactor remained unheeded. I saw myself in a world in which, had my distresses been real instead of feigned, I must have laboured through them unassisted, or have groaned under a state of dependence few would have had the generosity to free me from; though my whole life had been devoted to their service.

THE Elwoods and Althrop were the only persons I found deserving of the happiness I had bestowed on them. The former having learnt my misfortune amongst his parishioners, came post to London, and generously offered to share with me the salary he enjoyed through my beneficence; and the behaviour of the latter was so truly expressive of the goodness of his

his heart, that the sincerity of both remained indubitable. As a satisfaction to each, I promised to divide my time between them. The clergyman departed happy at the prospect of making his cottage more agreeable against it became the summer residence of his patron; and Althrop was not less so, at the idea of my passing with him the months of winter. Neither had the least suspicion of the deception; they knew my disposition, and consequently wondered not at the resignation I discovered at an evil they believed inevitable.

A MONTH had passed on without my having made the most trifling attempt to undeceive them, when one afternoon as I sat musing in the dining-room, Eliza and her sister brought each of them their work, and seating themselves by me, said they were come to bear me company; adding, that my own thoughts, in the pensive humour I appeared, were the worst intruders to whom I could give admittance. “We
 “may,” perhaps, continued she, “be able
 “to

“to divert you from reflections which
 “help to feed your melancholy; and if
 “we do not amuse, I hope at least our
 “company will not prove disagreeable.”

“THAT it can never do ladies,” replied
 I, pleased with their attention, “but why
 “do you sigh, Eliza?” observing her en-
 deavouring to stifle one, while it was echo-
 ed by another as profound from myself.

“It is a question, Sir, which I am almost
 “unable to answer; it is involuntary, and
 “I believe proceeds from habit merely.
 “But what occasions yours? I have heard
 “you sigh more than once to-day, and
 “cannot help fearing that some additional
 “uneasiness is the cause of it.”

“ALAS! Madam, those which spring
 “from me, are, like yours, from the force
 “of habit, but I hope derived from a
 “different source; you are on the point
 “of being united with a man endued
 “with the power to make you happy;
 “while I lament that I must no longer
 “indulge my partiality for an amiable
 “object, whom my adverse fate permits
 “me

“ me not now to aspire to, whom in my
“ days of affluence, I could think of
“ with delight; but for whom, under
“ my present disadvantages, it would be
“ madness to respire a wish. Our case
“ you see is far different, had you ever
“ felt a hopeless passion, I am sure, Miss
“ Althrop, you would pity me.”

“ I do so as it is,” replied she; “ but
“ cannot own my situation to be far pre-
“ ferable: to be under the necessity of de-
“ clining an offer all my friends wish me
“ to embrace, without a motive to assign
“ for my refusal, unless a wish to retain my
“ liberty, is, I think, nearly as painful as
“ to have entertained a partiality for one
“ you dare not look to. But, Sir, pardon
“ me if I say, that though I pity you, I
“ far more pity the woman whose senti-
“ ments are so abject, as to permit her to
“ refuse in adversity the man she would
“ have accepted in prosperity; such an
“ one must, in my opinion, be unworthy
“ the affection of Benignius; she must be
“ ungenerous to the last degree who
“ yields

“yields to interest, rather than a real
 “prepossession in favour of the object.”

“ON that head, Eliza, I must excul-
 “pate her; the lady who possesses my
 “affection, knows not my partiality; she
 “has both generosity and honour, but as
 “motives of delicacy kept me from dis-
 “closing my passion while in a state of
 “affluence, how can I aspire to her un-
 “der my present disadvantages? might
 “she not justly suppose I deemed her un-
 “worthy to share my fortune? It would
 “have formed my greatest felicity to
 “have placed her in a sphere more de-
 “serving of her beauty and accomplish-
 “ments; but I cannot think of reducing
 “her to one so every way inferior to her
 “merit; what idea would you, my young
 “friend, form of a man who could solicit
 “your alliance under the circumstances
 “of one unfortunate as myself.”

“WAS that man Benignius,” replied
 she with energy, and a face suffused with
 blushes; “he would to me be Benignius
 “still, though a yet more adverse fate
 “befel

“beset him; and such I should suppose
 “must be the sentiments of every woman
 “acquainted with his worth.”

“You think so, Eliza? I am happy in a
 “compliment which I know you have
 “too much honesty to bestow on me,
 “did it not in reality result from your
 “good opinion. Could I flatter myself
 “that she on whom I have placed my
 “affection, indulges for me one half so
 “favourable, I would brave adversity,
 “throw myself this moment at her feet,
 “and, since I cannot offer her a palace,
 “entreat her to share with me a cottage.”

“Do so, my estimable friend, and
 “should she refuse you, content yourself
 “with reflecting that she is unworthy of
 “your love.”

“Plead for me then, dear Eliza,” said
 I, encouraged by what had past, “this
 “(taking hers) is the hand alone I am
 “ambitious to call mine; may I flatter
 “myself that your wish to retain your
 “liberty, will expire with this avowal.”

WORDS

Words are too faint to express the contending emotions, which at that moment agitated her gentle bosom; surprise, love, and modesty, were each predominant; but the latter, though it permitted her not to own the extent of her affection, convinced me more than all she could have uttered, that mine was not misplaced. It will be sufficient to add, that from that period I began to taste of happiness: my Eliza accepted of my hand under every apparent disadvantage, and after our union, her generosity was rewarded with a knowledge of my real circumstances. The discovery appeared not in the least to enhance her happiness: superior to those illusions of vanity, which so generally take possession of her sex, she wished to lead a life of rural quiet. Immediately after our marriage we removed hither, and experience having taught me the essential difference between the use and abuse of wealth, my fortune has ever since proved both a blessing to ourselves and others. On the deception

ception being discovered, I doubt not but the glow of shame suffused the cheeks of many; but custom soon effaced it, they have long ceased to blush at their ingratitude, and now meet me with as perfect composure as if their friendship had been proportioned to the services formerly received from me.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

FROM CANDITAS TO ALONZO,

On the ill Effects of Vanity, and the Advantages of Truth.

WITH infinite satisfaction did I, my young friend, observe the reproofs you yesterday bestowed on Altamont for the extreme vain-glory he displayed in speaking of his family, his connections, and his circumstances, the latter of which he exaggerated too greatly not to leave us doubts of his being rather influenced by pride, than that strict regard to veracity, which every man of honour will observe in conversation.

BALTAZAR Gracian says, “ that a wise
 “ man will never speak in superlatives
 “ either of himself or others; as that
 “ manner of conversing ever wounds either
 “ our

“our prudence or our honour.” Exaggerations are as so many prostitutions of veracity, and discover both mean ideas and littleness of understanding; extreme pride awakens curiosity, and stirs up envy, in such a manner, that if merit corresponds not with the price we give it (as it too oftens happens) general opinion revolts against the cheat, and turns both the flatterer and flattered into ridicule and contempt. Thus is it why a prudent man will have a guard upon his lips, and of the two, prefer the error of saying too little to that of saying too much. Perfection is but rare, and though the meanest capacity appears sometimes to have discovered it either in themselves or friends, it is a subject on which it is better to remain silent, than impress the world with an opinion of our being vain of our own merits, or addicted to flattery on the part of others. In a word, exaggeration is a kind of lie which, though it may leave our good nature unimpeached, calls in question our

our prudence, and what is equally mortifying, frequently our understanding.

VANITY is even unpardonable when united to extraordinary qualifications, as it generally spoils the good fruits which they produce, and ever renders despicable those who would (divested of it) be deserving of our warmest praise; if contemptible in such, how much more so in those who are only the shadow of what they wish the world to think them. Truth, undisguised truth, how infinitely superior art thou to the false colourings of deception! every species of which degrades the human mind beneath the rank of beasts; yet how common is it, Alonzo, for vanity to predominate so greatly in the hearts of mankind, as to make them lose sight of the virtue on which, prior to every other, all our social and domestic happiness is founded. To what confusion and disgrace do not many of both sexes subject themselves by a ridiculous desire of appearing more great, more affluent, or more learned than they really are: strange infatuation!

tuation! to what purpose boast of either, since truth, late or early, is sure to triumph over pride; can we better display our greatness, than by a modest enjoyment of it devoid of ostentation? are words equal proof of affluence as the wish of rendering it beneficial to the necessitous? or can we prove our learning less than by endeavouring to render it conspicuous? If we boast of noble birth without possessing it, the discovery of the cheat exposes us to greater mortification, than the humble one our pride forbids us to acknowledge. Boast we of riches we enjoy not? and we are punished with the rehearsal of woes we are incapacitated to relieve, with the additional uneasiness of having it believed we want the will. Nor are there fewer inconveniences attendant on pretended wisdom, for though it may pass for sterling among the uninformed and ignorant, it ever betrays itself in the society of superior understandings; such impostors not only render themselves contemptible, but deprive themselves of those peculiar ad-

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vantages

vantages every liberal mind would gladly yield the humble inexperienced; while, on the contrary, they despise and flun the confident assumer. These are some few only of the innumerable bad consequences which are ever attendant on a vice that every virtuous mind must hold in strict abhorrence; there is no plea, however great, that is powerful enough to exculpate us from an error we might ever avoid by silence, even when no other resource is allowed us; but though not requisite for truth at all times to be spoken, when circumstances require us to be candid, it is better to speak it even to our own peculiar disadvantage, than leave room for the world to accuse us of deception.

THERE are many in the world who find a salvo for their conscience, in reflecting that a deviation from veracity, when intended to no one's injury, must be devoid of sin; but I must aver myself of a different opinion, for to whatever end intended, whether to establish, extenuate, or advance, still is it unpardonable in those
whose

whose education and understanding must have informed them, that speech was ordained for the purpose of conveying truth; a story simply told, while the narrator keeps to facts only, is ever to be preferred to one related with all the embellishments of a fertile imagination, in which the paths of truth are generally deserted for those of flowery rhetoric. It must be confessed that the bestowing of unmerited encomiums is less detrimental than any other species of delusion; but even flattery bears such an affinity to falsehood, that none but venal minds will stoop to practise it. I cannot better express my approbation of souls exempt from artifice, than in the words of the inimitable Young;

“ I give him joy, that’s awkward at a lie,

“ Whose feeble nature truth still keeps in awe;

“ His incapacity is his renown,

“ ’Tis great, ’tis manly to disdain disguise;

“ It shews our spirit; or it proves our strength.”

And in another part of his works, in which

he expatiates on the impositions practised by mankind he adds,

“ Their parts we doubt not, but be that their shame,

“ Shall men of talents, fit to rule mankind,

“ Stoop to mean arts that would disgrace a fool?

After quoting an author so much more able to do justice to the subject, I can only conclude myself as ever Alonzo's most devoted friend.

C A N D I T A S.

L E T T E R

LETTER XVII.

TO NEGLIGIA,

On the Subject of External Appearance.

THINK not, my dear Negligia, that in condemning those who make the adornment of their persons their sole study and amusement, I wish to abolish that regard to delicacy, which every female ought to observe both in her dress and conversation; so far from it, I think there are many situations in life, in which it is highly necessary to pay a strict attention to the external graces; in every one, a regard to neatness and propriety. They say that modesty bestowed on us our first garments, but I am not altogether of that opinion, as we have still whole nations who never wear any, and who, notwithstanding

standing, are not frightened at that exposure of their persons, which among us would be deemed the highest offence to virtue: I believe that instinct taught us to assume them at the beginning, to defend us from the inclemencies of the seasons; conveniency taught us to model them to our shape; refinement to improve them; and pride to distinguish by them those of superior authority and power. But vanity, which spoils even the best inventions, has corrupted the primary intention, by introducing a thousand whimsicalities and absurdities which help rather to disguise than ornament; in every respect we ought in some degree to regulate ourselves by custom, but I would never advise a young woman to invent a fashion, or be the first to follow it, unless perfectly assured it is such as will neither do a discredit to her taste or understanding, which is ever the case where the becoming is neglected for the modern. Never appear in a dress, my dear Negligia, that can disfigure your person, your birth,

or

or reputation; for be assured the latter must suffer if the external appearance corresponds not with that modesty and prudence upon which a well educated female is taught to set the highest estimation. Some philosophers tell us, that the virtues and the vices are the garments of the soul, and that it is by them we are known; now, my opinion is, that either vice or virtue cannot more powerfully display itself than by the exterior figure, at least it is ever natural to judge of the disposition by the dress, which though not always a faithful interpreter, seldom fails to furnish us with some idea of the humour and inclination. To avoid censure, (from which even the most rigid seldom are exempt) we should endeavour to particularize ourselves as little as possible; neither be slaves to fashion, or dress so entirely out of it as to draw upon ourselves the remarks of others; but above all, should avoid expressing that contempt of decency in our apparel, which ever renders the world suspicious of our virtue.

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THE graces and the virtues should go hand in hand : think not, my Negligia, that while neglecting the one, you are paying tribute to the other. A woman may be respectable, but cannot be styled amiable, who does not in some degree cultivate them both. Excessive negligence may subject us to an equal share of censure, as too great an attention to the adornment of our person ; for there are always those who are ready enough to assign causes and effects, those who will not fail to attribute a female's inattention to her toilet, as an attachment to pursuits less worthy of her sex. In every sphere of life, and indeed in every stage of it (so far as our circumstances will allow), it is our duty to preserve an appearance that may tend to render us respectable : fluttishness deprives both youth and beauty of its charms ; but in old age it is peculiarly disgusting. While young, we should in some degree conform to custom, but at the same time not entirely lose sight of that respect every one owes to the inclinations

nations

nations of their parents or their guardians. When we resign our liberty, we should not neglect to practise the same arts to insure, we before took to enslave. For to that contempt of dress many women are apt to display after the nuptial benediction, do we owe those general complaints of inconstancy which prevail among both sexes after marriage. There are few, however lovely in person, who do not in some degree stand indebted to the aid of external ornaments for that combination of attractions which strike so forcibly on the heart, the consciousness of appearing so as to reflect no disgrace on our understanding or our virtue, throws an air of serenity over the countenance, never to be found in those who are constantly under the necessity of apologizing for their apparent contempt of neatness, or of blushing for a levity of dress, which leaves no distinction between vice and innocence. In that, as in every particular in life, reason should be our guide; it would be as absurd for a woman of moderate, or no fortune, to

appear

appear with the elegance of a duchess, as for a duchess to dress in the character of a house-maid ; in the former case, discretion is sacrificed to taste, an essential more valuable in our sex than all the refinement on which, for want of experience and reflection, we are apt to pique ourselves. The appearance of every one should be regulated by their particular circumstances ; a prudent female will never be desirous of those superfluities from which she is precluded through want of fortune, nor will she, because denied the elegances of dress, neglect those less expensive attentions to her person which may tend to insure respect, though they command not admiration. In every one the desire of pleasing must be prevalent ; it is laudable, and while it leads to no unreasonable lengths, ought to be encouraged both in youth and age. To acquire every one's good opinion is impossible ; but by prudent management, and that deliberate reflection which ought to precede every particular action, we may insure a sufficient

cient share of it to render life agreeable. Few, however they may appear to despise the opinion of the world, find it entirely unessential to their happiness; to acquire it in some moderate degree must be the wish of every one, and to attain that end, can we do better than to preserve our own? a task easily effected by those whom nature has endued with reason, much more easily by those who unite to the gifts of Providence, the advantages of a liberal and virtuous education.

I MUST now, my dear Negligia, take my leave of you, with recommending to your serious attention, that regard to neatness and propriety which is consistent in every character, not more to be dispensed with in a learned than in an illiterate female; for though a good picture needs not the embellishment of magnificent framing, it is an indifferent compliment to the artist to suppose it undeserving any.

BELIZA.

THE END.



Cartwright, H.,

Letters moral and entertaining

London 1780

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